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SERMONS.

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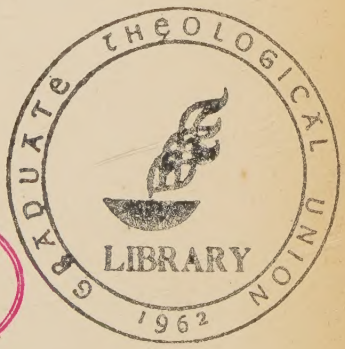
SERMONS

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH,

GLASGOW.

By WILLIAM PULSFORD, D.D.



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TO

THE CONGREGATION OF

Albany Street Church, Edinburgh

THIS VOLUME

IS DEDICATED AS A SMALL MEMORIAL

OF EIGHT YEARS' MINISTRY AMONG THEM

BY THE AUTHOR

PREFACE.

THESE Sermons were first preached in Albany Street Church, Edinburgh, and afterwards in Trinity Church, Glasgow, from brief notes, and have only now been written for publication. Whilst in substance and general outline they are the same as when first spoken, there are, doubtless, such differences in expression and illustration as would be likely to occur in writing out in full what had been prepared in brief notes many years before; especially as no care has been taken to distinguish between matter of recent and of older suggestion.

In publishing these Discourses, the Author has yielded, with hesitation, to the urgent and oft-repeated request of his hearers, many of whom are now themselves preachers, scattered hither and thither, but who, in the recollection of the generous

feelings of their student-life, have been pleased to desire some little memorial of the ministry of the Church in which they worshipped.

The selection of the Discourses has, in every instance, been made at the suggestion of some of those who heard them. They have, therefore, no formal connection, and nothing in common with each other beyond the great subject of every Christian ministry, The Christ of God, and the temper of mind in which they have been written by one who has been moved to speak in His Name.

This volume, in memory of the Author's Edinburgh ministry, will be followed by a similar volume containing sermons first preached in Glasgow.

GLASGOW, *Dec. 12, 1872.*

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SERMON I.

THE RICHES AND POVERTY OF CHRIST.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, Jan. 23, 1859.)

2 CORINTHIANS, viii. 9.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

THE Apostle here returns to the subject of the Corinthians' contributions for the poor at Jerusalem, which he had spoken of in the last chapter of his first epistle. Having, as it may be supposed, conciliated their affection, somewhat estranged, perhaps, by the severe faithfulness of his previous letter, he with great wisdom, and what we may call tact, again appeals to their liberality on behalf of their distressed brethren in Christ—refers to the example of other Churches, which, though in deep poverty, had abounded in this work of love—

suggests that the Church at Corinth should not be behind the Churches of Macedonia—reminds them of their zeal in this matter, now more than a year ago—hints that consistency requires them to complete what they then so zealously began—argues that the exercise of a Christian grace will re-act on themselves, that in ministering to the need of others, they will enrich their own hearts,—and, in the pregnant words of our text, calls on their own experience to aid and enforce his appeal,—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

These words present to us three thoughts for our consideration: 1. *The Native Riches of Christ;* 2. *The Poverty He chose;* 3. *The Wealth of His Poverty.*

1. THE NATIVE RICHES OF CHRIST. "*He was rich.*" "Jesus Christ" is the historical name of our Lord, His name as the man of history, and is not the name He wore from the beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning

with God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and partook of our poverty, but "in the beginning" He was rich in all the glory which He had with the Father before all worlds. The native riches of "the Only-begotten Son" are therefore the riches of God. Whatever God is, and has, "the Only-begotten of the Father" possesses, uses and displays. "The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him." "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."

The first display of the riches of the eternal Word was not in our nature, but in the things which He made. Before man's advent was a vast history. All things proceeded from His fulness, "were made by Him, and without Him, or apart from Him, was not anything made that was made." "Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things," "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; because in Him were all things created, the things that are in heaven, and the things that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things subsist." Before the

creation He was the eternal, unuttered Word in the bosom of the Father, in whom were all powers and possibilities. Creation presupposes Him as its origin, underlying ground, and sustaining presence. The history of the universe is but the record of the progressive display of His "unsearchable riches."

The creation of the heavens, of the earth, of all creatures, of Paradise and of man, presents to us but successive openings up of His riches. In Him were all things created, that from Him all things might proceed; and in Him all things subsist, that to Him all may return. He is the hidden spring, the open river, and the ocean fulness of universal life and being. Of all creatures, He is the ground and crown. He is the door of creation's descent and ascent.

But, whilst He is the presupposition of all things, without whom the existence of the universe were an unsolved and insoluble problem, He is also the prophecy of all things. All things look to, move towards, and only rest in Him. Creatures are incapable of explaining or completing themselves. They may be means, they cannot be ends. They have latent powers that they cannot exercise, desires that they never satisfy. Man is felt and seen to be the

crown of nature. But among the sons of men, there is no complete man. Men are but fragments of humanity, man gone into division; his features, parts and powers are everywhere imperfect, always in discord, nowhere in complete fulness, never in harmony. Men both presuppose and prophesy "the Son of Man with power." When "the Word became flesh," humanity first found embodiment, human nature became complete and crowned.

> "God in the person of His Son,
> Hath all His mightiest works outdone."

What then must His riches be who is the wealth of God, in whom, from whom and to whom are all things? Riches among men are distributed. To one is given genius; to another wealth of mind; to another force of character; to another social eminence; to another worldly abundance. He who appoints us our portions and divides our lots, so distributes His gifts as to make them the bonds of union between the several members of His family, and so apportions them as to create mutual dependency and reciprocal obligation throughout the whole sphere of life. But the native riches of our Lord is the wealth of all

wealth. All riches are His native right. In Him it pleases the whole fulness of God to dwell. Let us then for a moment contemplate His riches in a cursory review. Consider first of all the earth in all its wealth of land and ocean, its silver and gold and gems; its production of life in all its forms and in apparently wasteful profusion; the riches of its hidden wisdom in the prevailing order and perfect adjustment of its silent forces; and the wealth of goodness displayed in the designed beneficence that constrains all things to subserve the well-being and enjoyment of all creatures. Then call to mind the wealth which flows in the stream of human life made up of a thousand million of individuals, reproduced every thirty years, and all personally endowed with capacities of unmeasured thought, feeling and will. We must also remember that this world with all its riches is but a mere speck in the wide universe. From the earth we must rise to the earth's system of worlds, and thence to the starry heavens, and thence to the infinite unseen beyond the seen, not forgetting the wealth of the invisible universe which lies within the visible, before we can begin to estimate the native riches of Him of whose

grace our text speaks; the riches which He had with the Father before all worlds, by the possession of which it became His great work to bring Him out to view, "that in the ages to come He might shew forth the exceeding riches of His grace," and "cause all to see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ," "in reference to the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather up again together all things in Christ, the things that are in heaven and the things that are on earth," "to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." In the fulfilment of this purpose all that has hitherto been done forms as it were but the initial Revelation of His wealth, its first opening up, the early prophecy of the Great Future to which the growing Heavens of His fulness point and cry: *respice finem!* The riches of our Lord will only be seen in the end.

2. THE POVERTY HE CHOSE. "*He was rich; He became poor.*" To be poor, never having been anything else, can scarcely be regarded as an evil; but to become poor—how great a calamity! To have known the power, the influence, the comfort of wealth, and suddenly to become poor is a deep and bitter affliction. Yet He who was rich in all the wealth of God became poor. What a history of poverty is presented to us in that one word—*became* poor! The poverty of Jesus will ever be the sublimest chapter in the history of the Revelation of God. We seldom attempt to do it the poor justice we might. We are afraid of lowering His claims to the crown of His eternal glory in God, and, through fear, fail to exhibit the full history of His descent, in His "coming out from God and coming into the world;" in His exchanging "the form of God" for "the form of a servant;" in "His emptying Himself of His equality with God" and submitting to be less than the least of the servants of man; in His laying aside His self-possessed life and submitting to receive life and to be born from the virgin's womb; and, in His "being found in the fashion of a man"—His

choice of poverty, sorrow, suffering, death, the grave, and the prison-house lower than the grave. Only one so rich could become so poor. Let us individualise some of the features of His poverty.

And first of all the poverty of His *nature*. "The Word" which was in "the beginning with God, and was God" "became *flesh*," the frailest and most corruptible of all the forms of life. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth;" "the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;" "to-day it clothes the field with beauty, to-morrow it is cast into the oven." "He who was rich became poor," "the Word became flesh."

He who had life in Himself became dependent for life, and breath, and all things. He whom angels worshipped was made so much lower than they as to welcome the comfort and help of their ministrations. He who was the bread of God became dependent upon the bread of the world. His nature was full of wants. He was hungry and thirsty, weak and weary, and "was made in all things like unto His brethren." He, the Eternal

Son, having "life in Himself" and in the enjoyment of the Eternal, became partaker of a life subject to all the laws of *developed* existence. He grew, from infancy to childhood, through youth to man's estate. He who was the Wisdom of God grew in knowledge, and confessed Himself subject to its limitations. He who was possessed of "all power" receives strength from an angel, and craves the sustaining presence and fellowship of men. And He to whom all pray, became Himself a man of prayer, whose prayers were agonies unto blood-sweating.

His nature was subject to all the limitations of time and space, of human weaknesses and wants. And this subjection He foresaw, "yet emptied HIMSELF" and "came out from God" and "came into the world" a helpless infant, and grew up through the experiences of our dependent and slowly progressing nature to the knowledge of His relations to man and God, and to the re-inheritance of the glory He possessed with the Father before all worlds. Such was the poverty of His nature.

Let us now look at the poverty of His *circumstances*. The time of His birth was poor—when the

degradation of His nation was complete, when Judea wore a foreign yoke, and when His parents were summoned from their homes to be taxed under Roman authority for the government of the Cæsars.

The place of His birth was in keeping with the time, and both with the poverty of His nature. He was born in the place of cattle, "and laid in a manger," for "there was no room" for His expectant mother "in the inn."

As He was born in poverty, so in poverty He was brought up, and in poverty He lived and died. Very affecting are the words with which He tests the sincerity of one who proposed to follow Him: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Poverty of circumstances was the only fitting dress for His poverty of nature. There would have been an incongruity in His being surrounded with any of the forms of this world's wealth. The whole form and manner of His life must express and reveal the poverty to which He had stooped.

If we now call to mind His *experience* we shall find it presents to us an inner life of poverty in keeping with the poverty of His nature and circumstances.

He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Now there is nothing makes us feel how utterly poor we are like sorrow. Grief empties the heart, widows the affections, and paralyses the mind. We only weep when we are at our wits' end and our last resource has been exhausted. Tears proclaim our helplessness.

But of sorrow there are two kinds, "the sorrow of the world," and the sorrow which is of God. The one flows from a sweet fountain, the other from a bitter one. Worldly sorrow with folded hands and downcast eye, blind in fruitless tears, presents to us the living death; but "godly sorrow," though helpless, knows there is help, and with uplifted countenance looks and waits, with an assured hope for help—early or late. "The sorrow of the world" is the sorrow of the soul separated from God, cut off by sin from all fellowship, the bitter sorrow which lays the soul waste and makes the sinner an outcast from himself and forsaken of all—the sorrow which "worketh death." Jesus knew this sorrow. "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows;" "He was despised and rejected of men;" He was "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted;" "He was numbered

with transgressors;" "His soul was poured out unto death" and "made an offering for sin;" in agony and bloody sweat He wrestled in prayer until in darkness of soul, as God-forsaken, He cried—"My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Under the sin-cloud of the sins of the whole world, He stood in such relation to all men as to make their sins and sufferings and sorrows His own, and to be made a curse for them. By nature He was so one with mankind that His self-consciousness was inseparable from the consciousness of His union with the whole race. The suffering and death which He suffered from men He converted into suffering for men; for in the infiniteness of His compassion He felt the sins of mankind as if they were His own, and was able to carry on His heart, as the Great High Priest, the guilt of the world. So one is He with the sinful race that He can say—to use the words of Luther: "I am this sinner, his guilt and punishment belong to me;" and the sinner is able in faith to say, "I am Christ, His death and righteousness are mine." Only in this way can we bring near to our intelligence the fact that He who knew no sin was made sin for us, and was wounded for our transgres-

sions, bruised for our iniquities, and received our chastisement, that we might have peace.

He sorrowed and suffered for sin unto death, even the death of the cross, and His body was laid in the grave whilst His spirit descended to the prison-house of departed souls. He made His own the full consequences of our sinful history, and thus made an end of sin, carried away its curse, and restored our nature to God. And in this mighty work He made the experience of all poverty. His mangled body, as He hangs expiring on the cross, cries from its many bleeding mouths: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger."

And must we not also speak of the *duration* of His poverty? Is it possible to limit it to the days of His earthly history? Is He not the Lamb of God "slain from the foundation of the world?" Did it not "repent Him" at the entering in of sin, "that He had made man on the earth, and grieve Him at His heart?" Has He not been sacrificed in all the victims that have been slain? And have His sufferings and sorrows ceased? What mean,

then, the words of the Apostle when he speaks of "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ?" How otherwise can we be exhorted "not to tempt Christ," or be said to "crucify to ourselves afresh the Son of God?"

What an abyss of sorrow and suffering is here opened up to us! The mystery of sin and of Christ's suffering for sin, like the "mystery of godliness" and "the joy set before Him," refuse all measurement. We can but exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

We have now to consider—

3. THE WEALTH OF HIS POVERTY. "*He was rich; He became poor—that we through His poverty might be made rich.*" It is through His poverty that we are made rich. His riches flow to us,

and become ours, through His poverty. His riches require poverty as the medium through which alone they can be given to the poor. There is no communicable relation between the riches of God and sinful humanity other than His poverty, through which it has been made rich.

The wealth of His poverty is seen in its *voluntariness.* He became poor. "He thought it nothing to be in equality with God" in view of the requirements of a sinful world, but "eagerly emptied Himself of His glory." By His own act, "He became poor," the act of His eager love and obedience. "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith; Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body hast Thou prepared me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I: Lo, I come—in the volume of the book it is written of me—to do Thy will, O God." "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea Thy law is within my heart." He was rich enough in the purposes of His love to become poor. No one took from off His brow the crown of Heaven, He laid it aside; no one stripped Him of His royal robes, He unrobed Himself; no one paralysed the

arm of His power, of Himself He chose our weakness; no one shrouded Him in mortal flesh, of His own Will He assumed the limitations and bonds of our nature. He laid down the life of Heaven for the life of earth, as He laid down the life of earth for the life of Heaven. "I lay down My life," said He. "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The wealth of His poverty must for ever wear the crown of all His riches. Within the moral necessities of His own nature, in view of the requirements of ours, He possessed a free and eager joy, which led Him "out from God," and brought Him "into the world," to "become poor that we might become rich."

"For our sakes He became poor." His poverty was *vicarious* as well as voluntary. His riches were not laid aside for the sons of light; He did not become poor for the sake of the angels who kept not their first estate, but for the dust-clothed and sinful children of earth. For the "*indigentia Dei*," as the nature of man has sometimes been called, the brightness of the Father's glory veiled Himself in flesh. Had our circumstances and condition, calling for His help, been the result of misfortune or ignorance, His

pity were not so strange. But He became poor for sinners, for rebels, hard and unrelenting in their rebellion. "Hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us." "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Through such poverty flow riches enough to quicken the dead in trespasses and sins.

That we may be rich He became poor. *The beneficence of purpose* in His voluntary poverty is another feature of its wealth. He does not contemplate our deliverance merely, nor our restoration to man's primitive state. His purpose looks at more than our salvation. Our degradation and danger, our sinfulness and guilt, must be made to contribute to our exceptional security and glory. He became poor that we may be rich in all the filial correspon-

dences of the Father's wealth. "My God," says Paul, "shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ."

We must also glance at *the fittingness of His poverty for the communication of His riches.* We were poor. He became poor that through His poverty we might be made rich. We must become that which we would help, enrich, or bless. In that "He Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" He submitted to the law which conditions all help. "*Amor descendendo elevat!*" The father makes himself a child that he may win the child's heart—the teacher makes himself one with his scholars that he may the better teach them. We must weep with those who weep if we would comfort them, and lie under the sins of sinners if we would save them from their sins. *Sympathy* expresses in a word the philosophy of help. In the sympathy of Christ lies our help, and His might to save. The riches of His grace and glory could only be communicated through the poverty which brought Him under our condition. Paul dilates, evidently with great pleasure, upon this law of help to which he paid such glad obedience. "I made myself," He says

"servant unto all that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law as without the law, that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." "He who was rich became poor," "was compassed with our infirmity," "touched with our feeling," "tempted in all points as we are," "that we might find grace to help in every time of need," and that He might become our "eternal salvation."

We must also speak of the *capacity for wealth contained in poverty.* Only a nature capable of great riches can be subject to great poverty. A simple nature can only be subject to simple and easily satisfied wants. But a great and complex nature is subject to profound and manifold wants. And a nature with capacities for Divine powers, endowed with a hunger and thirst that only the Infinite can satisfy, must be liable to appalling and overwhelming poverty. But the depth of poverty measures the ex-

perience of the riches which deliver from its destitution. Only a nature capable of the highest is susceptible of the lowest. Only a creature made in the image of God, and constituted a partaker of the Divine nature, could suffer the loss of God and be "without hope in the world." And only on those who have suffered from the want of God could there be the display of His innermost riches. The deepest wants in man are met by the innermost "need's be" in God. The riches of God in their deepest depth possess a central relativity to the need of His creatures without respect to personal merit or desert. The deepest need calls forth His crowning help. He is good to all; complacently good to the good, mercifully good to the wicked; friendly is His goodness to friends, compassionate to enemies; exalted to those near, humble to those afar off; towards Jerusalem and the gates of Zion His love flows freely, but towards Admah and Zeboim His love becomes vehement and conquers its way within Himself to reach them. "The vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" become "the vessels of mercy prepared for glory." It is because there is nothing so impoverishing as sin that sinners are receptive of the

otherwise hidden riches of the glory of Divine Grace. Sin opens up and explores in the creature solemn and awful depths, but the awful depths of sin become filled with God's mercy towards sinners. The possibility of radical perversion carries the possibility of absolute conversion. The Kingdom which cannot be moved is the Kingdom established over not only organic derangement but the chaos of elemental disorganisation. That nature in which an end of sin has been made is destined to wear the Crown of Holiness. The mystery of iniquity is to become the full and complete manifestation of "the mystery of Godliness." The nature which has been the seat of awfulest contradictions is to be the home of sublimest reconciliations. No wonder that in the view of our sinful nature, St. Augustine, with such an experience as his, should have been led to sing the praises of that "*blessed guilt* for which so great a Redemption has been provided," language which an experience like his may know how to justify, though we may not know how to adjust it in the science of our theology.

Christ made Himself not only subject to the poverty of man's sinful history but to sin itself, and

thereby made an end of it in its ultimate possibilities, as well as in its central powers, made a triumphant shew of its empty delusion and nothingness and for ever broke and destroyed its spell. In our nature He passes through the last "hour and the power of darkness" and celebrates His victory over its spoiled principalities and leads out "captivity captive:" "wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name that in the Name of Jesus—the man of history—every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

O the depth of hidden riches, O the height of manifested glory in the poverty of Jesus!

SERMON II.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THOUGHT.

(Preached on Sunday Evening, Nov. 1, 1863.)

2 CORINTHIANS, x. 5.

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

I HOPE I am not wrong in presuming upon an interested attention while I address you on a subject fundamental to all your studies, to whatever branch of inquiry they may belong, namely, that of the exercise, culture, and control of our thoughts.*

The text will have already suggested to you, the character of my discourse, which will take the following order: 1. *A few remarks on the power of thought and thinking;* 2. *On the necessity of leading our thoughts;* 3. *That, to lead our thoughts, we must interest them;* 4. *That to interest, so as to captivate our thoughts, our*

* This discourse was preached to Students of the University.

thinking must be obedient; 5. *To the authority of Christ.*

And, then, we shall conclude with a few other considerations immediately connected with, and suggested by, those now enumerated.

1. THE POWER OF THOUGHT. "The greatest on earth is man, the greatest in man is mind;" and the great function of mind is to think. The ability to think is man's great distinction. If other creatures think, it is not for their thought that they are distinguished; but, man without thought is destitute of the great human characteristic. By the exercise of thought—transferring what is without within—we can carry the "world in our hearts." And by thought, we can also outwardly embody the creations of our minds, and thus give a soul to the material, and a body to things spiritual; by thought, we can recall the past and live again in it, anticipate the future, and inhabit it as our home; by thought, we can walk as seeing the Invisible, and dwell in a world which transcends the senses; by thought, we can ascend to Heaven and God, and also descend to him who, as anti-theos, setteth himself

against God. We need not trouble ourselves to find a definition of this wonderful capacity to think. Any capacity is best understood by the functions it exercises. Faculty and function can never be dissociated. Faculty conditions function; function pre-supposes faculty—whether otherwise to be recognised or not. By this faculty of thought, man seems to be distanced from every other creature by an impassable gulf; for, if other creatures have built the way which leads up to man, it is one they have not been able to follow. We need not, therefore, stop to determine the precise relation of creaturely instinct to human thought. When other creatures begin to do what men have ever done, we may then begin to inquire concerning the nature of their blood, and whether they possess "the deep that lieth under."

Thought, then, which is man's great distinction, is also the *instrument* of all his work. Without thought there is nothing done that can truly be called a *work*. Thought conceives the achievements which the hands accomplish. Without it the hands would neither know what to do, nor how to do it. Within creaturely limits it is a power of creation. Consider what this power of thought has already accomplished,

what is still being done by it, and what prophecies of work continue ceaselessly to proceed from man's busy brain.

Thought is also the *great material* with which we work. All work is the working out and working up of thought. The actual amount of this material present in the world, at any given time, defies calculation. Yet, that which exists is as nothing in comparison with what, at any moment, might be called into existence. Thought is capable of indefinite multiplication. To what extent is it not multiplied in seasons of excitement and hours of inspiration? What is the amount of thought produced in a community impassioned by some event which awakens their depths? The critical periods of History discover mines of inexhaustible wealth, unsuspected in ordinary times, and reveal in men powers of vast and indefinite expansion. If we sometimes hear men talk of being used-up—of the need of travel—of fresh scenes to replenish their exhausted resources—is it not because they forget to use themselves? "He who would bring home the Indies must carry them out." Some of those whose thoughts continue to sow the world with ceaseless harvests never wandered from the site that

gave them birth. He only can be used-up who has not learnt to use himself.

It is impossible to estimate the value of thought, and the profit to be derived from its exercise and use. Thought gives value to everything. Work without wit or wisdom is of little market value, or personal profit. Works of skill are costly. Skilled labour commands the highest market price. Though potentially so abundant, the actual scarcity of thought enhances its value. Thinking is too laborious to become soon popular—requires too much self-denial to be pursued without the love of it. And, even where there is this love, the aid of external necessity is often required to insure its patient exercise. Internal and external necessities generally combine to make the man of thought. Splendid powers of mind to the man of wealth have, too often, proved worthless, because unaided by what the Germans call *Brotstudien*—studies carried on for the sake of a livelihood. Thinking is too spiritual an exercise for most men, and few cultivate thought without pressing need. Hence, it is because men of thought are rare, and the results of thought so profitable, that the few who think are so highly valued and not unfrequently

considerably rewarded. By the wisdom that erreth not, those members of the social body which seem feeble are found to be more necessary; and though receiving little outward, vulgar regard, are destined for more abundant honour. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." Let no man, then, despair of reaping a rich harvest in becoming a man of thought; for, not only is culture always its own recompence, but the enhanced capacity to serve the community —which is its result—rarely fails of remunerative employment. And as the world completes its history thought will be more and more in demand. In all emergencies—crises of difficulty and danger—the man of thought will come to the front. "The words of the wise are heard in quiet more than the cry of him who ruleth among fools." "Wisdom is better than strength," or "weapons of war." "The poor man's wisdom may be despised;" but, it is a "well of life to him who has it." "Wisdom is justified of her children."

The value of thought is further seen in its power—when wisely directed—of control over the inferior

powers. A man of rightly-directed thought cannot well be a low, bad man—a man given to excess. He who is habitually familiar with thought's pale face of just-proportioned beauty, will observe the limits and measurements of truth, and be a man known for his temperance and moderation in all things. Earnest and well-chosen engagement of mind disengages the body from every excess, and disqualifies it for low pursuits. Well-directed activity of mind not only preserves the body in *manly* health, but acquires wisdom, which is the health of the soul, and "more precious than rubies; all that can be desired are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour." Without thought, we live a parasitic life, and, having no root in ourselves, are strangers to the world's great wonder and to God. Nothing can be compared in value to thought.

2. BUT FOR OUR THOUGHTS TO POSSESS THIS VALUE, WE MUST LEARN TO LEAD THEM. Now, before a man can lead his thoughts, he must possess them, and not be possessed by them; he must have them at command and under control. But to how many will it seem idle to talk of leading one's thoughts, and as

hopeless a task as that of endeavouring to lead the winds? For who can tell whence his thoughts will come, and whither they will go? Who is able to foretell their order or determine their direction? Nevertheless, however difficult it be, we *may* learn to lead them; we *must* do so if they are to be of real, of lasting value to us. For thought unled, like an unbroken animal, will be drawn hither and thither by the allurements of the senses; or left to vegetate, to be passively subject to external influences and outward circumstances; and, like plants and flowers, now in sunshine, now in shade, at one time refreshed with rain, at another withering from drought. Yes, left to vegetate, but I should have added, but not to bear fruit; for there is no order in the thought of an undisciplined mind, consequently no harvest—no accumulation of thought and its results. Vegetation has its harvest because it enjoys the influences of wisely-ordered seasons, but the mind that merely vegetates has none, and remains a solemn waste, of unordered change, an awful spectacle of active but unproductive power. Our thoughts to be of value must be led. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

But if a man does not lead his thoughts, some other power will, some power of the world, of the flesh, or of the devil, or all these powers combined. Now, the central character of the power of our thoughts makes it a first necessity that we should lead them, if we are to remain in possession of ourselves. Thought determines the man. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It arrests the attention, awakens feeling, inflames the passions, subdues the will and commands action. Thoughts, therefore, unled will be to a man what winds and waves are to a ship under canvas but without a rudder, or what steam is to an engine without the guiding rail, —a driving and destructive power.

For, if we do not lead our thoughts, but are led by them, we shall be "led away;" at first attracted and enticed, at last irresistibly made to follow the drag of our own aberrations. No other power can supply the place of man in his manifold and wonderfully complex nature; no other can occupy its very centre so as to be the spring and regulator of the whole. Every other lead which may be given to his thoughts will be relatively superficial, partial, one-sided, excessive and defective. Every power but the true one

will make itself more and man less, so that if the flesh leads, he becomes carnal; if the world, worldly; if the devil, devilish; the man in his true humanity disappears, and is only to be seen in the disguises of the false powers which possess and lead him away. While man's true power will ever subordinate all things to his use and benefit, will make him more and more, and all besides less and less as compared with him; every other will allow him to have no root in himself, will empty him of all true contents, and deposit in him the ground and give him the experience of a life, to which the vain show and pageantry of "the course of this world" will not appeal in vain. And once brought under a false supremacy and made captive by his own thoughts and passions, what is there left in him by which to disengage himself from the debasing thraldom! His weak velleities, when once aroused to make a stand against this growing enslavement, will be found impotent against the subtle possessions which pervade his whole nature. The experiences of this false life occupy his memory, its seducements taint his blood, its imaginations surround his will and saturate it with their influence, so that it often happens that while he is arousing

resolution to resistance, its malign seductions, like pestilential vapours, stealthily arise up out of his experience, invade his thoughts, awaken his desires, make captive his will and complete another confirmation of his oft-repeated enslavement in action, which he curses, and for which he has so often cursed himself before that he begins to grow weary of cursing, and to confess himself helpless against what he loathes but cannot leave. Esau having sold his birthright, finds in himself no power of repentance. What is so important, then, as that we should have power over our thoughts, that we should be able to choose them, to select those we wish to retain, and to dismiss those we would banish; that we should be able to hold and fix arrested thoughts, infuse them with our will, and work in and by them our good pleasure. Think for a moment of the power which flows unused, wasted, and perverted through one mind in a single day, in day-dreaming, as we say, because there is no ability to lead the thoughts.

3. BUT, IF WE WOULD LEAD OUR THOUGHTS, WE MUST KNOW HOW TO MAKE THEM INTERESTING. This is the great question—how so to interest our-

selves as to captivate these wayward fugitives of the mind. We cannot lead thought where we feel no interest. The mind uninterested soon withdraws, and the will soon wearies in urging on the mind in a course of thought that does not engage the affections. The mind readily places itself at the service of the heart. The affections control the will. This, in part, explains the difficulty found at the commencement of any new study. It is difficult to arrest the attention and fix the thoughts where we feel little or no interest. To master the details of any subject in which we are not truly interested is an irksome task. But when we take to a subject, as we say, with what eagerness we pursue it, how easily its difficulties are overcome, with what patience we investigate its minutest details, and carry inquiry into its remotest connections. Thought weds itself to the affections. The mind readily labours for what interests the heart. The heart lives with its treasure, and surrounds it with habitual thought. These thoughts of the heart involuntarily and unconsciously arising from the ground of the affections, repeat themselves so frequently that they soon become established. We should mark those thoughts which come unbidden and return un-

solicited; note well their character, and ascertain their right to the place they seek to occupy. And we cannot do this too soon, for thoughts which occupy the heart become impassioned, and are difficult to dismiss, though they may be such as it ill becomes us to cherish; and, if not at once dismissed, become habitual ere we are aware. And, thoughts thus wedded to the affections, and carried in the congenial currents of the heart, so rapidly multiply associations that the difficulty is to abstain from thinking; for thought is captivated, and captivated thought must be active.

4. BUT, HOW MAY WE LEAD OUR THOUGHTS INTO CAPTIVITY? Thought may be *led*, but cannot be forced. To lead our thoughts, we must observe the nature of the mind, which is susceptible of influence, but not of force. Our leading, therefore, must not be arbitrary, but in accordance with law and order—truth and justice. There is nothing more repugnant to the mind than the tyranny of wilfulness; but the appeal of law and order—truth and righteousness—accords with its nature, and awakens their own deep-laid echoes in answering assent. No man is able to respect the arbitrary dicta of his own will, but the authority of truth and goodness com-

mends itself. While wilfulness is an unnatural crime against the will, and arouses the whole force of nature against it, the sublime authority of truth calls forth the homage of all our powers as being accordant with them, and capable of awakening their pre-established harmonies, and thus creating, as it were, their response to the sphere of their satisfied life. No other authority than that which commends itself to the mind can be sustained; for, though it may have outward support, it is destitute of inward, and its centre of gravity, if I may so express it, falling without itself constantly tends to overthrow what has been arbitrarily set up.

To lead our thoughts, then, we must present to the mind that which is agreeable to its nature, and simply ask for obedience to an authority which, though it speaks without, appeals to its own "Amen," within us. The mind must be made to feel that its law, though carried within itself, is not of itself. That it is constituted under the authority of law and order—the authority of that law and order which sustains the Throne and receives the homage of God Himself. Would we lead our thoughts into captivity—our leading must be a call to obedience.

"Obedience. Yes, but obedience to what authority? or, if you reply to the authority of truth, how is the authority of truth mediated with respect to a nature that has become false?" To this question we give a threefold answer.—The first and nearest authority for this eternal order, to which our thinking must be conformed, is our conscience, our "moral sense," our "inner light," or whatever other name may be given to that authoritative voice in man, which cannot be *directly* seduced, silenced, or destroyed. God has left to the conscience the mediation of His authority and teaching, whether presented in His works, ways, or word. Paul only sought to enforce that which "commended itself to the conscience in the sight of God." And Christ presented no other authority than the self-commendation of the light of what He did and said. "Tell John," says He, "if he wishes to know who I am, what ye have seen and heard." And to Philip, He says: "If you do not believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, yet believe Me on account of the works that I do." He felt that there was in man a power of judgment to which He could appeal. "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." Man's con-

science is endowed with that power of judgment, which makes him responsible for an obedience according to the light. This, then, is our first and nearest authority. Our thoughts must be led by our consciences.

The second, but higher, authority is the Divine Word. Second, because it appeals to the conscience, and rests its authority upon its ability to call forth an approving judgment. The Word has its correspondence in the conscience, as the light has its corresponding faculty in the eye which witnesses of the designed agreement between them. Without the light the eye were dark; without the eye the light unseen. So the Word of God, by awakening the conscience awakens a power, to whose judgment it submits the claims of its authority. But, while the Word is an authority second to the conscience, it is a higher authority. Conscience is corruptible, and has been corrupted. The Word is "incorruptible," and "liveth and abideth for ever." It enlightens and teaches the conscience, and seeks to re-write the Law of God in the renewed heart. The Word faithfully represents the judgment of God, and enables the spirit, which is given to every man, when once

awakened, to see things in His light—even the deep things of God. The spirit in the child has an ear which knows the Father's voice, and an eye which discerns His light; and is the child's capacity for being taught of God. Under the inherited corruption that is in the flesh, and the influence of the vain pageantry of "the course of this world," the conscience, as the power in man of a fellowship of knowledge with God (as the word indicates), is dead, and needs to be quickened and enlightened by "the Word, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Thus this Word, which at first submits its authority to the judgment of the conscience, in due time judges the conscience, and condemns the imperfection that attaches to its discernment of truth and error—good and evil—and seeks to bring it into an agreement with the Light of God in His Word.

But there is a last and highest authority Who submits His claims to the conscience, namely, He Who speaks in the Word. Last, because, without the Word

which addresses the conscience through the ear, we should be ignorant of Him. His voice without words, whose "chord is gone out through all the earth to the end of the world," fails to awaken a sense of His presence, much less to teach the knowledge of His Will; and "the light which lightens every man" comes to us through an atmosphere that is so dense that its source is hidden. With light everywhere, men know not God. "How shall they believe in Him," asks Paul, "of whom they have not heard?" whose minds "the god of this world hath blinded" lest "the light of God should shine unto them." It is through the Word of God spoken "at sundry times, and in divers manners in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days by His Son," and henceforth "by the foolishness of preaching" that He is revealed to us as a God of attractive goodness and mercy. In Jesus Christ, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth." In Him we have, though last, our highest authority for the obedience of our thoughts. And, when He is once seen, like the risen sun, He accounts for and claims as His, all the light that preceded Him. He

is the centre and source of every attraction. No sooner is He "lifted up" than our whole nature submits to Him. Our affections are won by His charms, our will gladly submits to His will, and our thoughts become free in His captivation. With His reign set up in the heart, submission becomes a devotion, obedience a worship, and the whole life moves in charmed circles of rectitude and peace. The powers of His Life, His Light, His Love are, therefore, "the weapons of a warfare," which are "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It was said of Greece, when made captive by the power of Rome, that, by her charms, she turned vanquishment to victory, and conquered her conquerors. And He who is the Master of all charms, when He suffered Himself to be imprisoned in the underworld, returned triumphant—leading captivity captive. Behold Him!—open your ear to His gracious words, give Him His place in your heart, and every unnatural alliance will be dissolved, every unholy combination broken up, and all the elements of your nature reunited

under the sweet control of His personal attractions and the government of His peace. He is the heavenly magnet which, from amid the ruins of our nature, will gather together every fragment, adjust part to part, and restore every vestige of His long-lost image. He is the Sun which will make and govern the day of our reconstituted life. He is the spring of all our powers, and will regulate our activity and secure our rest. He is our life-fountain, Whose streams will preserve health, and impart vigour to our whole nature. He is our All and in all, and having Him, the soul exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee!" He is the soul's Beloved. Union with Him is eternal. For "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

How blessed it is to know that there is a way for our thoughts, a way having all the authority of law, the satisfaction of truth, the charm of goodness, the promise of stability, and the certainty of perpetual

progress! A right, royal, central way, which conducts to the centre of all blessedness!

How blessed it is to know that this way is His, Whose "counsel standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations," Who has access to our wills and all the springs of our thought and feeling, which He can replenish, keep pure and direct at His pleasure. That it is His Who is the God of our prayers, Who can cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and to Whom we can address our prayer:

> "Direct, control, suggest each day,
> All I should do, or think, or say"—

nay, more, that it is His Who has undertaken to do so as "the Captain of our salvation." Admit Him to our hearts, and He will lead our thoughts captive, not by force, but by the love He inspires. He leads in a way that delights us with the charms of rectitude, of peace, of liberty, of perfect rest in the full activity of all our powers, of an inspiration that gives fulness of pleasure, while it sanctifies the whole life—makes it His own—so that it is no more we that live, but Christ that liveth in us—every thought being brought into voluntary subjection to the Divine Will.

But, in order thus to lead our thoughts, He draws us not merely "with cords of love" but also by "the bands of a man"—by influences in harmony with the laws of our nature. He knows we are amenable to reason, that we carry an echo truth can awaken, that we respond to goodness and yield to mercy. By appealing, therefore, to our several powers in accordance with their own freedom of action, we are made willing in the day of His power, and yield ourselves up to His sway. What then must be the state of a soul whose thoughts are led into captivated obedience to Him Who is "the Chiefest among ten thousand," and Who will lead us into the chief of the ways of God! And from His wondrous ways opened up in the material universe, we know how infinitely more wondrous must be the ways which lead to the central glories of the Father's kingdom!

Is He then, my brethren, the guide of our thoughts? For whoever or whatever leads our thoughts, leads also our souls. The character of our thoughts reveals their leader. But how many of you are there who make the character of your thoughts no concern, who hesitate not to cherish thoughts you would not dare

to express in words—to embody in action? Let me arouse you then to the fact that a thought is the same in quality as the act to which it naturally tends, and in which it completes itself; nay more—that it is now that inward act in progress of becoming an outward act. A great authority says, by the lips of one of his characters, "I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none." We, taking our stand one remove nearer the sources of our manhood, should rather say, "I dare *think* all that may become a man; who dares think more is none." "For those things which proceed out of the heart make or unmake the man." "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Learn then to judge of the character of your thoughts by looking at them in the light of action. We should be ashamed to think what we would be ashamed to do. Then, learn also to bring your unconscious thinking to the bar of judgment. Let me suppose some of you to be living without prayer, in the neglect of the Bible, and without any reference to God —that you have been brought into this life of godlessness without distinct intention, under the gradual influence and leading of the unconscious thoughts of your heart. Let me further suppose every one in this

congregation, and in this city, to have been led into the same godlessness of life, and that no one in Edinburgh has prayed to-day, no one opened the Bible, no one, in thought, word, or deed, made any acknowledgement of, or reference to, God; that He has been altogether ignored, and the entire city godless. Now, supposing all this to have been the case, let me ask, would the knowledge of it comfort you? Would it give you a feeling of security? Would you lie down in peace and safety to-night, none daring to make you afraid? And if not, why not? Because, to allow yourself to act in a manner you would not justify in others is to condemn yourself. I beseech you, then, my young brethren, to deal faithfully with yourselves, and, as I doubt not, it comforts you to know that you are sons of praying parents, members of a Bible-loving community, residents among those who observe the Lord's-day—give yourselves to prayer, the reading of God's Word, and the observance of His day, or cut yourselves off from the false comfort you seem to derive from the fact that you are in the midst of those who attend to what you neglect.

How specially important is this subject to you who are young, that you should have your thoughts

under wise control! With your thoughts wisely governed, how much any one of you may make even of this life! but, without such government, while great will be your loss in this world,—how unutterable your loss in the world to come! Oh! you young men, with the maximum of physical force and passion, but the minimum of experience, in whom the animal is strong, whilst the man is weak, give Him your thoughts who will give you in return the profit of all things—the security of rectitude, the blessedness of present peace, and the joy of a great hope, which maketh not ashamed.

It becomes us all, as inexperienced, short-sighted, and impotent mortals, to place ourselves under safe and helpful guidance. "For who knoweth what is good for man through all the days of this vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" What blind man would entrust himself to an unknown guide, or consent to be led by an unfriendly hand? You remember blind Oedipus, in the Greek play, how distrustful he was of strange guidance, and how comforted to have the hand of a child who could be "eyes to him!" How much more does it become us, as spiritually blind, to seek the guidance

of One who knows the way, and in Whom we may safely confide! For, while there are many who offer to lead us, there is but One to Whom, without fear, we may commit ourselves. "I know," says Jeremiah, "that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' If Oedipus, overpowered with joy, on hearing the voice of his daughter, eagerly lays hold of her hand who would be eyes to herself and eyes to the blind, how gladly should we, on hearing the Father's voice, yield ourselves up to be led by Him, Who, as both the eye and the light of the world, may well be light and eyes to His children!

And this is our great privilege,—not the privilege of thinking as we wish, or doing what we will, but the privilege of hearing the Father's voice, and of being led by the captivity of every thought to the obedience of Him Who is "the Way, the Truth, the Life."

SERMON III.

LOOKING UP AND LIFTING UP.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, March 13, 1863.)

PSALM CXXI.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."

HILLS have a fascination for those brought up among them. How Israel in Babylon sighed for their much-loved hills! How the Swiss away from their own country pine for the mountains of their native land! How dreary a flat country to the Scotch fresh from their Highlands! Hills have a charm for all.

The Bible owes much of its interest to the fact that

it was written among the hills. The names of its hills give you the chain of its history. The contents of the Sacred Book cluster around attractive heights. As the spinal-column in man is the pillar which supports the members of the body, so the mountains of Scripture stand as the back-bone of their history. Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Pisgah, Tabor, Calvary, Olivet, Mount Zion, not only give you the mountain range, but call up, historically, the contents of the Bible.

Jesus loved the hills. His chosen walks were among them. The hills were His sanctuary for prayer; the hills were His temple for worship; from the hills of Capernaum He preached; the crest of Tabor was the scene of His transfiguration; on the hill of Calvary He was crucified; from Olivet He ascended.

There is an affinity between souls and hills. Especially for those who have become acquainted with their own solemn depths and sublime heights. In man's earthly estate wonderful heights are laid low. He has descended from the eternal hills. He came out from God, and came into the world. He has fallen from a state of elevated purity to one of degraded sinfulness. The hills should, and often do, awaken in him a strange sympathy, help him to

understand his own nature and history, as well as direct him to regain his lost home of purity, peace, and blessedness.

Man's dwelling-place is God's book for man. It contains the Father's first lessons for His child, reveals the history of his origin and nature, and nature's portrait of his history, is in deep sympathy with him. "For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" with him, and will so continue until his complete Redemption.

Being away from his home, and half a stranger to himself, the broken conformations of the outward world; the deep, dark, mist-shrouded valleys; the bold, aspiring, light-seeking mountains deeply affect him. He is quieted and soothed and calmed by them. They hold him spell-bound whilst they breathe upon him a pure and elevating spirit. He lives from a deeper depth, and his life rises to a greater height among the hills. They enable him to understand why he cannot settle down in, nor be satisfied with the low levels of a merely earthly experience. He learns from them why the dead uniformity into which our ordinary life so readily falls is continually broken up. It becomes clear to

him that the endless forms of tribulation to which man is born, lead him into the depths, that he may there learn to seek the heights. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord," is the language of all those who are brought low. Man, in trouble, instinctively looks to the hills, he feels the attraction of the Father-land, and knows there is help for him there.

So you see the Psalmist in his first words strikes the key-note of tender and exquisite harmonies in this Psalm. May the spirit of his spirit sing them in all our souls while we muse upon his thoughts!

"I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES TO THE HILLS." Man knows that he is low, that he needs to be lifted up, that he cannot lift himself—he can but lift up his eyes. He knows that his lowness is not lowly, but degraded and proud. By his natural birth he has come into low places, and in himself he has forsaken the heights. What he is by nature he has confirmed by choice, and allowed the conditions of his natural birth to form his character and determine his life. He has inverted the true order of his parts and powers, degraded his nobler faculties, and raised to a bad eminence his lower passions and propensities.

The naturally exalted has been degradingly humbled, whilst the naturally low or base has been humiliatingly lifted up. The outward world tends to awaken the sympathy of the thoughtful, for the true order which has been lost. It pictures to him both sides of his nature—his real and his ideal life, the life he lives, and the life of which he dreams, and for which he prays. The hills represent heights that he ought to attain—the deep places, depths of degradation into which he has fallen; light stands for the day of peace and blessedness which should be his—darkness, the cheerless night in which he really lives; the tempest represents the strife of abused passions ever craving, never satisfied—the calm, the peaceful rest, and joyful order of which he dreams, but, alas, too often dreams in vain; summer stands for what should be the promise, the beauty, the fruit of his life—winter, for what is its actual spiritual inertia and cold sterility. He is surrounded by a picture of what he is and what he ought to be. In himself he is as an angel buried, who has half learnt to be contented with his grave. Though imprisoned by a sinful darkness, and fettered by a chain of evil habits, the hills will not allow him

wholly to forget his lost heights of freedom, peace, and blessedness, to which, now and again, he fain would, but feels he cannot return. The way of ascent is difficult. There *is* a broad and easy way, but it leads to deeper depths and heavier bonds. But in the deepest depths, and under the heaviest burdens, he ever and again remembers the heights, though the corresponding life may, long since, have been transferred to his dreams. His way has been a journey westward. His learning has been a forgetting. So far has he travelled from his Father's house and heart, and from himself, that he well-nigh forgets who he is, and whence he came; and only when specially aroused does he sufficiently come to himself to look to, and sigh for the forsaken heights. But under all the entombments of his original nature there still survives the indestructible power of the life destined to look up, waiting for its resurrection. A morning follows the darkest night, a waking hour waits upon the deepest sleep, and, since one died for all, a Resurrection is prepared for all the dead. Already the cry has gone forth, "Awake, thou that sleepest." Once awakened, he will lift his eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help.

MINE EYES WILL I LIFT UP. Our eyes travel where our feet cannot climb, lay hold of what our hands cannot reach. Incalculable heights are surmounted by our eyes. Our eyes outrun all distances, and unite themselves to the objects of vision, and fill our souls with substance from afar. It is by contact we see, by the contact of the senses with the objects of sense that we are sensible of things external to and other than ourselves.

But the eyes that the Psalmist speaks of are the eyes of the soul, and the hills to which he looks are the hills of help for the soul. Our souls relate us to the world of the soul, as our senses relate us to the world of the senses. The soul's faculty of faith is to our eternal nature what our senses are to our temporal nature. And as the evidence of the senses puts an end to all strife about the things presented to them, so faith gives restful assurance with respect to the objects of belief. Faith is that faculty of pure reason with which the soul of all the senses is endowed. The assurance of faith is, therefore, not the assurance of one, but of all our faculties in that ground of our nature which unites all our powers. The assurance of faith is the assurance of seeing, of hearing, of

tasting, of handling—all in one and at once. The Psalmist is fully assured as to the hills of help to which he lifts up his eyes. He only speaks of what he sees with "the eyes of his heart;" for it is "with the heart man believes" and looks at spiritual things.

There are no heights like those to which the soul rises in the exercise of faith—heights incredible to the senses. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear;" by faith, we finite creatures, with a sense-experience only of the finite, nevertheless apprehend the infinite; by faith, we creatures of "flesh and blood," shut in by the material, discover our only true home to be in the spiritual; by faith, we mortals, in a world of mortality, anticipate immortality; by faith, we poor slaves of a manifold bondage, look for perfect liberty; by faith, we, the offspring of earthly parentage, claim God for our Father, and Heaven for our home. These are some of the heights of which the hills are representative, and to which they point, hills of hope, and help for our original and eternal nature. The objects of faith have sown their seed in the soul, which, on being quickened, become "the substance of

things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This statement, I am aware, is but the evidence of testimony to those who do not believe, and "all men have not faith," though to their shame it is said. There is, however, no other evidence that can be given of the high things of the soul to one destitute of faith. The evidence which an awakened faculty receives cannot be apprehended by one in whom that faculty still sleeps. The evidence of sight cannot be given to the blind, nor that of the ear to the deaf, nor can the evidence of spiritual things be given to those whose spiritual discernment remains unquickened, or has been closed in worldly sleep, or quenched in the darkness of "trespasses and sins." But when the superficial crust of this world's life, under which the true life slumbers, is broken up, and the soul is aroused, and made sensible of her destitution and danger, nothing prevents her looking and crying for help, though all help of which the senses know anything has been exhausted. Helpless, the awakened soul, when other helpers fail, looks to the Heavenly hills for the help which only waits for the disposition to receive it.

"I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES TO THE HILLS

FROM WHENCE COMETH MINE HELP." The hills are as the throne of help. The hills defend and bless the valleys, the mountains the plains, as the heavens defend and bless the earth. The hills stand for the calm and majestic home of unchangeable goodness and might. They lift themselves above the changes that they control. The hills gather and disperse the clouds, attract and revivify the air, condense the atmosphere, distil its living waters, and send them forth to refresh and fertilize the plains; they are as the earth's lungs to restore to the atmosphere its used-up virtues. To a groveller, only intent upon what may be got out of his little holding in the valley, thinking only of his "bushels, and barrels, and beer," the hills may appear but as so much sterile waste, not knowing that he owes to those naked heights the purity of the air which keeps the mildew from his wheat, that down those furrowed pillars of the sky flow the streams which keep the valleys green, and provide food for man and beast.

But the help of the hills is representative of the help of other heights. The hills are not the sources of help. They receive whatever help they furnish. The hills may stand for the throne of human help, the calm

and majestic height of man's unchangeable goodness and might in Christ; they may also be representative of thoughtful elevated human souls, who, standing apart from, and rising above all others, seem to be of little use, and of no market value in the eyes of the many, but are nevertheless of more service than all the world besides. They prolong the world's day, do battle with its storms, and bring peace, purify and lighten the corrupt and heavy atmosphere of thought and feeling, enlarge, defend, and bless the whole sphere of human life, and keep open the gates of heaven for the descent of more than human help and hope. The hills do but represent those bold, lofty, solitary human souls whom the world does not know, but who mediate its regeneration, and hasten the day of its redemption.

But of more than human heights are the hills representative. They stand for "the hill of the Lord," for "the Maker of heaven and earth." The Maker only can help that which is made. The Psalmist does not suppose that his help comes from the hills, but from Him to Whom they representatively point. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help." "My

help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth."

The help that man needs must be personal, must be congruous with his nature. Neither the material nor the impersonal can render the help which a personal nature requires. Man's helper must be "meet for him." Man needs man, and not even man from among the sons of men whose breath is in his nostrils, but "the Son of man with power," to Whom it is given to have life in Himself, from Whom the sons of men *are*, and in Whom they subsist, and to Whom in time of need they look. He from Whom cometh our help is "the hill of the Lord," our Mount Zion.

"HE WILL NOT SUFFER THY FOOT TO BE MOVED." From "the hill of the Lord" we receive help for the valley. If we look up we shall receive light for our way, and be led in a plain path. To give heed to the tangled web of circumstances will only perplex and cause us to "stumble at noon-day." The hill of the Lord is to the pilgrim who looks up what the compass is to the mariner who finds his course by it through the troubled waters of the pathless sea. For those who look to Him, the Lord opens up "a way in the

desert," a path through the woods, and turns the sea into dry land. "In the presence of their enemies He prepares them a table" and causes them to "lie down in peace," and goes before them in the way—a guardian, guiding Presence—"a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night."

"BEHOLD, HE THAT KEEPETH ISRAEL SHALL NEITHER SLUMBER NOR SLEEP."—The clouds may shut out the light of the sky even by day, and under a cloudless sky the sun early leaves the valleys, and though over the hill-tops the light long lingers and the day seems loath to depart, the night closes in, but from Mount Zion the light is never withdrawn. He who looks to the hills may sing in the night: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou Lord makest me dwell in safety." "The night shall be light about me; yea the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

In this short Psalm the writer is so full of the protection and help of Jehovah that he cannot find terms enough in which to express the rich fulness of his joy and confidence. Fifteen times in eight verses he assures Israel of the "help," "keeping," and "preservation" of God—at all times; under all circumstances; for every one, with respect to his whole nature and history; for time and eternity. The Lord from the hills shall help thee; the Maker of heaven and earth shall keep thee; He shall not suffer thy foot to be moved; He will keep thee when thou sleepest as when thou wakest; the Lord shall keep and defend thee upon thy right hand, from the scorching heat by day, from the cold by night; from every form of evil He shall keep thee; He shall keep thee on thy right hand—the centre of thy power—and defend thee in thy soul—the centre of thy being; in thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and for evermore.

The help and protection of the Lord accommodate themselves to all our individually varying states and circumstances. Help on our "right hand," is help for our whole sphere of life; help "by day and by night," is help under all changes; help which subdues

the fierce power of the light and also protects from the evils which "walk in darkness," is help in all our conditions; "preservation for our soul," is help for our whole nature from its centre, help for body, soul, and spirit; help in "our going out and coming in," is help watchful and perpetual.

My brethren, let us learn to look up, up to the hills, to forsake the plains and low levels of our sense-life. Let us learn to live with our eyes directed to the hills. How many seem to prefer the downward use of their eyes! Like Bunyan's muck-raker "that could look no way but downwards," how many are so downward bent, raking to themselves "the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor"—all of which the fire will consume,—that the hills of everlasting hope invite them in vain.

Oh, what hills of hope and help there are for the upward use of our eyes, altitudes of our own nature as seen in Jesus, which, like Alpine summits, far above every storm-swept height, look down in the mute eloquence and sublime repose of their eternal state invitingly on all below! Oh, my brethren, let us learn to contemplate the glory and blessedness of our eternal home on Mount Zion; to behold the mount of

Ascension which rises out of "the valley of the shadow of death;" to feast our eyes upon the exaltation of our nature "above every name that can be named;" to wonder and adore while we contemplate the perfection of human character in the enjoyment of perfect liberty and worthy to live in the light of God; worshipfully to gaze at the hill of heavenly powers for earthly aid as revealed in the Holy Ghost,—powers which seek to sway our dark hearts that we may rise to the light; powers of Heaven for our lowest earth; spiritual powers for carnal souls! These are some of the hills to which we should habitually look that we may cease to grovel in the earth, and acquire strength to rise to the hill of Light and Life and Love.

These are the hills from which have descended the powers of all true greatness. The habit of looking up to them was the means by which David, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel; Peter, James, and John; and all the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, of every age and clime, became inspired with the love of heavenly things, which disentangled them from the snares of earth, and made them holy, reverent, and great. And the sight of no earthly treasure, the digging in no earthly field, made the fathers of our

country's greatness what they are,—worthy of reverence and honour. The men who permanently bless the world, are men who look up, and receive that which, travelling down "the starry road of the Infinite's abode," fills their eyes with reverence and a grand hope, and inspires their souls with a divine disdain of earthly goods and worldly honours, as being unworthy of man's "chief end."

This habit of looking up will teach us to understand the use of trouble in the valley. In stormy and tempestuous weather, those who live among the hills look up to them. By the sight of the hills they judge of their prospects in the valley. Let us learn to regard all that troubles and disturbs us in our health, our home, our circumstances, as the means by which God calls upon us to look up,—to disengage ourselves from earthly entanglements,—to prepare to ascend. By the trouble to which we are born, He seeks to wean us from the love of earth, that He may woo us to the love of heavenly things and the spiritual life of our eternal home.

The natural charm and attraction of the hills, the love of ascending, should also suggest to us that we are to be withdrawn from this earthly valley. Every distur-

bance which takes place should warn us that we have to leave it. Now, what we *have* to do, it behoves us to learn to do in a becoming manner,—in a manner becoming men,—willingly, cheerfully, in the assurance of hope that the way of our appointment is that of our advancement. As we have to leave this earthly dwelling-place, let us do so in the expectation of a heavenly home—incorruptible, glorious, and eternal. And in order to this, we must not forget that looking up precedes going up—that help to ascend descends while we look up. Step by step we should rise and make our survey of the better country, that we may at last make our departure with joy from the hill-top of our hope, in full view of the Fatherland.

SERMON IV.

THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE WAY TO IT.

Preached on Sunday Morning, October 7, 1860.

HEBREWS x. 19-25.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

WITH all the details of this passage, so full as it is of instruction "concerning the things which are most surely believed among us," time will not permit us to deal with any minuteness, yet, in a service like the present,* there is a certain fitness in our presenting, in

* This discourse was preached at the opening of a Church.

some measure at least, if only in the broadest and most general outline, those truths which will underlie, as the foundation or presupposition, everything that may here be said or sung in the worship of God. The passage speaks to us concerning "The house of God;" it also points out the way to it; and exhibits some of the characteristic features of those found walking in the way; and with each of these points we propose to deal.

Before, however, entering upon the consideration of these thoughts, there are one or two of an introductory character, suggested by the text, to which I wish to call your attention. The first is concerning the history of the Revelation of the Divine presence—the presence of God to man. For although God is omnipresent —always everywhere present—He is only present to us as He is pleased to manifest Himself to our consciousness. "We cannot by searching find out God." By no determined effort of mind, by no process of reasoning shall we "find out the Almighty." Paul saw that "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and the world by its wisdom now often denies Him. Where He is known He is self-revealed. This self-revelation of His presence is presented to us in a

most striking and significant history. We too often forget that for many ages in the history of the world there was nothing that we now term a "House of God," that for thousands of years men lived and died without having any set place where they assembled to meet and worship their Maker. And yet during this time there was no deification of the forces of nature. In the primitive simplicity and childhood of the race, devout men found no difficulty in realising His presence. They are said to have walked with God, to have talked with Him "face to face," and to have had fellowship with Him "as a man with his friend."—Throughout the pre-diluvian ages there was no House of God, and the manifestation of His presence was directly personal, though it may be difficult to bring home to our intelligence the way in which the sense of His presence was awakened in men; but possessing, as they still did, a simple, childlike power of realising it, they felt Him to be with them, held converse with Him and dwelt in His sight. Before sin became so sinful as quite to cloud the faculties of divine apprehension, God was their besetting presence. But with growing sinfulness came growing blindness (to the "eyes of the heart,") until God was shut out and His

presence hidden from them as by a cloud. And when sin became "exceeding sinful," just as at first the sin of our first parents separated them from the garden-presence of God, so it now separated them from His personal presence, for He is represented as leaving the earth and ascending above the water-floods from whence He "came down" to communicate with men. He "came down to see the city and the tower." "Let us go down"—to confound their language, is a form of speech which shows how "their sins had separated between them and their God."—God "came down" to Moses on the mount and Moses "went up unto God." After the giving of the law, in order that its sanctions, and the authority of Moses, might be sustained by the Divine presence, instructions were given for the erection of the tabernacle. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them, a tent of meeting where I will meet and speak with them, a tabernacle of testimony witnessing of my presence; and they shall know that I am their God." This form of the Divine presence, visible to all, and suited to their migrations from place to place, was of short duration; and it is only when we come to the time of Solomon

that we have a temple, a fixed abode for God, and a centre of worship for Israel, to which the pious Jew turned and directed his thoughts and his prayers. But even this temple-presence did not last long, and, like the others that had preceded it, passed away; for with the growing corruption which brought about the captivity of Israel and the destruction of the temple, came the growing power of the Prophets, the *media* of another form of the presence of God, and who, as His commissioned messengers, having direct communication with Him, became the bearers to Israel of the Divine message: "Thus saith the Lord!" From time to time individual men were thus raised up, qualified as Prophets, and commissioned by Jehovah to declare His will—men who were not only the *media* of His presence, but also bold and determined reformers of the abuses that corrupted their fixed institutions. For although after the Captivity there was a restored Temple, yet evermore had they to mourn that there was in it "no ark, no holy oil, no fire from heaven, no Urim and Thummim, no Shekinah-presence."—But with Malachi this word-presence also ceased, and the people were left to lament: "We see not our signs; there is no more any Prophet

neither is there among us any that knoweth how long;" and in the absence of any personal mediation of the Divine presence "it pleased the Jews to appoint a governor in their own name until there should arise a faithful Prophet from the Lord."—Then, in "the fulness of time," came the forerunner of our Lord announcing the advent of still another form of the Divine presence: "Behold the Lamb of God,"—our "Emmanuel, God with us." But like every other form of His presence, the Incarnate presence of God was not permitted to remain with us; for just as man's first transgression separated him from the garden-presence; and his growing sinfulness separated from him the personal-presence of the patriarchal age; and the corruption which brought about the Captivity separated him from the temple-presence; and the wickedness which persecuted and slew the prophets caused his word-presence to cease —so the Incarnate-presence was driven from the earth by those, who, filling up the full measure of iniquity, stained their hands in the blood of Jesus. "Destroy this temple," He had said, "and in three days I will raise it up again." Dismissed from the earth, He ascended to Heaven, and, as at the termination of

every previous form of His presence, so now, in judgment and mercy. In judgment and mercy His presence was separated from the garden; in judgment and mercy at the flood; in judgment and mercy at the captivity; in judgment and mercy when the voice of the last Prophet ceased; in judgment and mercy when the Lord was crucified—in judgment as it fell upon Jerusalem and destroyed it,—in mercy as His Spirit descended upon His disciples on the day of Pentecost, inaugurating still a new form of the Divine presence which continues to this day, and shall continue to the end of the world, a form of His presence corresponding with His spiritual nature as well as with the individuality and universality of His Kingdom. He is no longer with His disciples in visible incarnation, but with His mankind in the presence of His Spirit—a form of His presence which is not, however, final; for he is called "the Comforter," and is sent to comfort us while our Hope tarries, and until our Lord returns to set up "His house not made with hands eternal in the heavens," where we shall for ever be with our Lord. Till then we wait in hope and prayer, and in our prayers the spirit prays: "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." Very striking and full of

significance is the whole history of the means by which God has been in all ages, and still is, seeking and preparing to dwell with and in His people.

Another thought suggested by the phraseology of the text is this—that our present, highest conceptions concerning our relation to God, and His relation to us, are but the unfolded, exalted and spiritualised form of ideas with which the Jews of old were so familiar. They had their house of God—so have we; they had their holiest of holies—so have we; they had their separating veil—so have we; they had their high-priest, and sacrifice, and entering in within the veil—and so have we; but ours is the expansion, the exaltation, the spiritualised form of theirs. Now, not at Jerusalem, nor on any holy mount, but everywhere we find His house. The world is now the place of sacrifice; the sky the separating veil; heaven, the holiest of holies; Jesus is our high-priest; His death the sacrifice; His ascension the passing through the veil—within which He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and to send down His Spirit upon all who come to God by Him. And, if, in a word, we would measure the height of our privileges in comparison with theirs, we may do so by simply asking

the question, what a pious and devout Jew would have thought, to say nothing of a congregation of pious and devout Jews, if one from among them, standing before the veil, had presumed to address them in the language of the text, saying: "Brethren, let us boldly enter into the holiest through the veil?" That which would have been in their ears the direst blasphemy, to be immediately punished by death, is to us but an exhortation to exercise the Gospel-privilege bestowed upon every Christian child. Without the ceremonies, without the outward washings, without the endless preparations which characterised the annual entrance within the veil of the high-priest alone, we now exhort one another, "With boldness to enter within the veil, and draw near to God in full assurance of faith."

Let us now turn to our subject, and consider it in the following order: 1. *The House of God;* 2. *The Way to it; and* 3. *The Features of Character which should distinguish those found in it*—dwelling for a short time on each of these thoughts.

1. THE HOUSE OF GOD. What a Divine house is the physical universe, if we had but minds capable of realising its unity and looking upon it as a

whole! What a great house even this earth of ours is, full of things innumerable both great and small! And yet this is but the outermost court to this house. Pass from the world, in thought, to the system of worlds, in relation to which our globe is but a speck; travel on through eighty millions of such systems in the midst of which the solar system is reduced to a point; and still onward beyond the limits of our science and calculation, until thought wearies, before you ask for the holy centre, the house of Him Who dwells in "the high and lofty place," and yet is not far from the least of His creatures. What then is the sphere which is filled and embraced by that centre? We may ask the question, but the mind is simply overwhelmed by the contemplation of such vastness. What a house, then, this physical universe is for Him "Who stretcheth out the Heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in!" "Yet the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him!"

But the physical universe, whatever be its glory, can never be the true house and home of intelligence, thought and will. Mind can never rest and make its dwelling-place in that which is merely physical. The

material may be a sphere for its exercise, and a means to some higher end, but can never be its home. It is so with us. The house in which we dwell and find our home, in which our thoughts and affections rest, is not a house that is *made*, but one that is *born*. Man's true house is not built up with hands, but born about him. When God said to Abram, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." He immediately replied: "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" If he were left childless, however otherwise rewarded, he felt he would be poor and destitute, and without the only true home on earth. Thought only dwells with thought, love only rests in love, personality is only satisfied with persons. Our nature is of so rich a quality, that it feels homeless apart from its own kind with whom to dwell. What were all the earth to man without men, though all its riches were gathered together, and made a perfect paradise, though all heaven's pomp should celebrate a perpetual marriage with earth's beauty! Only men build up the home of man. And He whose image man wears, and whose child he is, says, "My people are My portion; Israel is My inheritance." What a sphere, then, of

intelligence, love, and perfected will there must be as the aim and end of a physical universe which is so glorious! And if man's nature rests in nothing less than man, and demands a human home in which to dwell, what a sphere of voluntary thought and reflection there must be for God, the Maker of heaven and of earth, and the Father of us all!

But just as within the sphere of the physical, we require the intelligent, so within the sphere of intelligence there must be that of friendship, for the house of God. God can only dwell in the house of His friends. For, with the personal powers of thought, affection and will, is necessarily associated the power of refusing, as of granting admission to any one. With the personal endowments, therefore, of the sons of men, exists the possibility of the Father being refused a home in the house of His children. The *possibility* of refusing, did I say? An awful possibility, which has become a more awful reality. Man has rebelliously refused admission to God,—who "is not in all his thoughts," and the Almighty comes forth to lament, summoning heaven and earth to His declaration, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children,

and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but My children know not Me;" "I am not in all their thoughts." "I come to My own, and My own receive Me not." "Behold, I stand at their door and knock, if so be they will at last relent and let Me in;" I cannot force My presence—not against the will can I cross the threshold of any heart. My home can only be where I am welcomed—the home of My friends; where "I am known of Mine," and they "hear My voice" and "constrain Me to come in;" where "I am loved, for if any man love Me, We will come and make our abode with him," and he shall be "one with us as We are one." The universe of His friends, of His innocent, as well as of His redeemed and happy creatures—these form the house of God; this is Mount Zion, "the Mountain of the house of the Lord," the dwelling-place of the Most High—to which we are invited to draw near, "to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to God, the judge of all." The Father's dwelling-place is in the house of His children.

But this, the house of His friends is a "house of many mansions;" it has its outer courts, its vestibule, its holy chambers, and its holiest; and between the outer courts, occupied by the children of earth, and that holiest of holies, what intervening abodes there are of angels, of elders, of principalities, of thrones, of dominions, of powers, and of the redeemed of all ages and experiences,—throughout which, and in whom, God is all and in all!

But within the holiest is enthroned, in meekest majesty, One who is "set over the House of God," and who, in bodily presence, is the House of God, in the express image of His person and the brightness of His glory, in whom it pleases all the Father's fulness to dwell, and who is the home of His eternal rest. Look at Him; you will discern features which are not altogether strange to you; find that you are familiar with the form that thrones there, that it is of One who wears your own nature, the Son of Man, who is made the ruling centre of the whole house, the head over all things—man's sanctuary and God's home. Having been crucified on earth, He still wears His blood-stained garments in Heaven as His most royal robes, and crowns Himself with

His cross, as emblematic of the glorious principle of His conquests. Round about Him, before the throne, are a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, who cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" And round about *them* "stand the angels and the elders and the four beasts and fall on their faces and worship," while the song of the redeemed is sung, but when it is ended, break forth in chorus, saying, "Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, unto our God for ever and ever." This is the house of God, which surrounds, and centres in Him who is set over it, through whom "we have access by one spirit to the Father, and are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." And he who

is inspired to speak of the future history of this house says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And I heard the voice of a great multitude from the redeemed among men, saying, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength." And He replied, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it; the Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation." This is the house of God, to which, "Having boldness to enter in within the veil," we are exhorted to "draw near." Let us now consider—

2. THE WAY TO IT, as pointed out in the text. We must not forget, in considering the way to this house, that the house itself is spiritual, that it is the home for the thoughts, for the affections,

for the will of God; a sphere in which His Spirit finds fellowship, satisfaction and rest; in which He is all and in all—the spring, the source of all power and life, and of all the forms of life answering to the power.

Then, clearly, it must be a house only accessible on certain definitely determined conditions; conditions, not arbitrary, but imposed by the very nature of things, given in the very nature of God and His relations to His creatures. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter in, but he that doeth the will of my Father," Christ says. And in another place, speaking to Pharisees, He said, "I go my way and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, *ye cannot come*." Everything has its own way by which it may be entered. Things must be related to have access to each other. Darkness has no access to light; hatred no power of approach to love; but thought has access to thought; affection an open way to affection; will stands open to will. None can enter the house of God but those who, possessing His Spirit, and being "renewed after the image of Him that created him," are in love with Him and led

by His light. Therefore it is not only written "except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," but "*ye cannot see* the kingdom of God." Spiritual things have spiritual ways of access, and require spiritual discernment.

No wonder then that the text speaks of the way to the house of God as a "*new way*." It is not the original way of man's primitive nature, but a way newly opened up in view of the necessities of the state and circumstances into which man's sin and sinfulness had brought him, a way for sinners into the holiest of holies, the presence of God. Without irreverence, we may say, it is a way that was new for God as well as for man; for only by the solution of the problem, how God could become a "guest with sinners," is the question answered, how sinners may find access to God. But as God has found His way to man in his sinfulness, we may hope that there is a way for sinners to God in His holiness. The way of His descent to us may become the way of our ascent to Him.

But, it is further called a "*living* way," not only a "new way," as having been newly opened up, but "a living way;" and it is so called not merely because

it leads to life, nor because it gives life, nor because it vitally renews itself, nor because its use is restricted to the living—though in all these senses there is much truth; but because it is a way set up in Him who is *the Life*. Christ is the way to Christ, as the light is the way to the sun, and the seed-life of the flower the way to the flower. He is the life-fountain and also the stream which conducts to it. And because it is a way set up in Him, it is a "living way," and fills with animation those who walk in it. Every other way wearies the traveller, but in this way the farther and longer he journeys, the more is he refreshed, energised and inspirited, so that he who at first has need to be carried receives strength to walk, and he who walks learns to run, and the runner to fly, hastening with ever increasing swiftness of flight, to challenge his destiny as one called in Christ to seek in the heights, "glory, honour, and eternal life."

But, in addition to its being "a new and living way," it is also said to be a way which Christ has "consecrated for us through the veil of His flesh." By this expression, "the veil of His flesh," the Apostle gathers up in unity of significance the whole

incarnate relations of the Son of man, in His representative character, on our behalf, and represents them as a veil of separation between Him and the house of His glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and says, "Only through that can there be a way for man to God." And this was true for Christ Himself as well as for us. Only by the rending of the veil of His flesh could He, who "came out from God," return to Him. Standing in our nature, and as our fore-runner, He must needs die to enter into life. By dying, the veil of His flesh was rent, and a way opened up through death to eternal life. He who put on our nature that He might "bear our griefs and carry our sorrows," must needs be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace might be upon Him, and that we by His stripes might be healed;" for, "without shedding of blood, is no remission of sin." "Forasmuch then as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same," that, "by the grace of God, He might taste death for every man," and "through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who

through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage;" and thus, as "the Captain of our salvation, made Himself perfect through suffering," and opened up the way for the coronation of our nature "with glory and honour." Seeing then that "Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" let us draw near and enter into the holiest through the veil which is His flesh, "by the new and living way which He hath consecrated for us." Permit me now to direct your attention to a brief consideration of—

3. THE SEVERAL CHARACTERISTIC QUALIFICATIONS WITH WHICH WE ARE EXHORTED TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD WITHIN THE VEIL. "Let us draw near in the full assurance of faith;" that is, being fully assured that this way of "access to God" for sinful men, has been opened up; that God has solved His own problem; and that in Christ, His representative and ours, the Son of God and Son of Man, it stands a completed work, with its gate on this side the veil, for us as for Him—the cross, and,

through the veil, its goal—the cross crowned in glory. Assured of this, let us draw near none daring to make us afraid; for should any arrest our course, and demand our right to enter within "the holiest," we can point them to the way, and to our hearts, sprinkled with the blood of Him, who in our nature and in our name, is set over the house of God. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of One: for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Without, on this side the veil, we carry the same right of entrance as that by which He reigns within.

Having this assurance of faith, "let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." An assured faith in the fact that we have the new and living way of access to God cannot fail to beget a stedfast hope. Faith not only warrants but demands hope, is in fact the substance of our hope. And He who is its Author has made abundant provision for its growth and expansion in the great exceeding precious promises He has given us, through which we "become partakers of the Divine nature," and "receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." Let our faith then clothe us with this cheerful confidence and bright assurance,

and so fill us with its joy, that we make glad confession of it as we walk together in this heavenly way.

We shall thus walk in fellowship and "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works," which is the third distinguishing feature of the "walk and converse" to which we are exhorted. The Apostle would have us remember that we walk not alone, that our salvation is no mere individual, private good, but a participation in the great commonwealth of the Divine blessedness. No man lives who lives to himself. The rich fulness of our individual faith and hope and love is only ours in fellowship with the household of God. Alone and in separation from the great body of believers we become cold, dark and dead. The circulation of our spiritual life is retarded and becomes too weak to put forth its threefold crown of faith, hope and love. But if in the activity of the powers of our individual life, stimulated by fellowship with the whole body of Christ, we provoke one another to love and good works, we shall never fail to have not only a present knowledge of the Lord, but also an assurance for the great future: "for if we do these things we shall never fail: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us

abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

In view of these most precious benefits which are made to depend upon our fellowship with the people of God, the Apostle warns his readers against the spurious conceit of a fancied superiority, which shews itself in all ages, in the neglect of the ordinances of God's house and of fellowship with His people, as if the private resources of individual endowments and culture, could be such as to make the most distinguished possessors of them independent of the life of the whole body of which they are but members. He therefore adds to his exhortations, "do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;" do not pride yourselves in a private religion of peculiar views and personal feelings, which separate you or keep you at a cold distance from your brethren, and tempt you to fancy that within the little vessel of your own soul, cut off from the sea of life, you can carry and enjoy the powers of its ocean fulness. The life of the richest individuality, isolated by coldness and want of sympathy, from the great body of Christian society, must be contemptibly poor in comparison with that of the

humblest individual endowments in fellowship with the growing "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Let us then, my brethren, in the full assurance of our common faith, rejoicing in our common hope, and in the enjoyment of the love which is common to all, draw near and enter within the veil, in company, amid the songs of the redeemed family, and in the growing strength and fellowship of the whole household, triumphing as we go in the progress of the "building which groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit;" and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

SERMON V.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, May 11, 1856.)

ROMANS, viii. 28.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

WITH what ease the writers of the Bible give expression to the mightiest and most astonishing statements! Not only here in the words of my text, but throughout the Scriptures; as, for instance, "He calleth the stars by their names; He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." What massive weight and comprehensiveness of assertion there are in these passages;

and yet, in what winged words, laying down the whole doctrine and principle of an universally beneficent Providence! The most astounding assertions are made without hesitation or doubt; not, however, because the immense difficulties—not to say apparent impossibilities—which stand in the very teeth of their verification, are either ignored or overlooked. For, in the immediate connection of the text, those aspects of nature and features of human experience, which seem to give the lie to its statement, are not only referred to, but presented in sharpest outline, most vivid colouring, and with the utmost force of expression. "The sufferings of this present time;" "the subjection of the creature to the bondage of corruption;" "the groaning and travailing in pain of the whole creation;" the anguish of man's inner and deeper experience; are all painfully vivid to the Apostle's eye, and burdensome to his heart. Nevertheless, in the midst of "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword," he is bold to assert, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Who of us, in the face of the broad features of everywhere-abounding suffering, dares to repeat his

words, or is able to say that he partakes of the bold confidence of his assertion? And yet, how desirable to be able to do so? For that man is certainly to be envied who can contemplate impending famine,* pestilence, and war with unmoved confidence as to the issue; who can call to mind all our military establishments armed for conflict; our gaols, with their usual quota of men of violence and crime; our madhouses and their deplorable inmates; our hospitals and their patients; our poorhouses and their mass of pauperism; the accidents and fatalities that attend our life; the orphanage, widowhood, and destitution that everywhere abound; the different forms of vice and crime that roam at large, unassailable by our laws; and, in the presence of all, maintain unmoved that, "all things work together for good to those who love God." Who of us, I ask, can join in this language in the face of the broad features of the world's sin and woe?

Some there may be who are able contentedly to meet the dark mysteries of Providence with the dogmatic, "It is so; and whatever *is* is best"—

* This discourse was preached at a time of scarcity, prevailing sickness, and threatened war.

a conviction, perhaps, that grew up out of the reverent trust and experience of their childhood; who, having found that much that was difficult to understand and hard to bear in the discipline of their early years had brought about happy results, now interpret the broader features of human life and the government of God in the light of their first home and the discipline of their parents.

But, this condition of our early unquestioning reliance is seldom left undisturbed; and, once disturbed, can only be otherwise re-established. We cannot return to a state we have once left. We may ascend to a higher; but the lower must ever be to us lower. The son, who, questioning the constraints of home, has forsaken them, may return to them and find them wise; but, he can only do so by a different road. He may regain confidence; but it will be another and far deeper trust. Ay, as different from his early confidence as Joseph's, when he stood before his brethren in Egypt, was different from that he enjoyed when he wore his coat of many colours.

The certitude of our convictions is very various; but always in strict relation to our character, culture, and progress in life. It may be a certitude from the evi-

dence of the senses, or it may be a rational, a moral, or a spiritual certitude. In our present state, that of the senses is not only the earliest, but is, from evidence, the most direct, and creates an undoubting conviction; in the future state, the last will occupy the place of the first, for we shall "see face to face, and know as we are known." But, as the law of our life is, "first, that which is natural; and, afterwards, that which is spiritual," we should expect the certitude of our hearts, in relation to spiritual things, to fluctuate with our own state. There will be times of spiritual apathy, when we shall be glad to fall back upon the letter of the Word, saying, "Thus it is written, and therefore *must* be;" and there will be other times of spiritual fervour, when, with "the eyes of the heart," we enjoy open vision, and in light see light.

How are we to regard this certitude of the apostle? "We know that all things work together for good." Must we not look upon it as a rational conviction, strengthened and confirmed by an experience ample, varied, and wonderful; established by a faith in the Christian verities, and made immoveable by the spiritual visions of a heart disciplined by trial, and purified by affliction? And this is a certitude open to

us all, if we seek it; for though it may seem impossible to our reason, it is easy of attainment to "the obedience of faith," and yet faith is not blind. Let us contemplate the source of its light, that our reason be not confounded at the confidence of our heart. And let the following be the order of thought: 1. *All things are at work;* 2. *That they are working together;* 3. *And working together for good;* 4. *And, if for good, then for the best;* 5. *On behalf of those who love God.*

1. ALL THINGS ARE AT WORK, AND SUBJECT TO CONSTANT CHANGE. The fact is obvious. Ceaseless change conditions everything on earth. Our hedges and fields retain not their beauty, our summer flowers are already in their graves, and our summer's light and heat decline. What work these changes indicate and predict! They are themselves the results and causes of others of wider range and mightier force. The very earth grows old, and the heavens are not what they were.—And among the sons of men there is nothing stationary, no one abiding. The fathers of a previous generation, could they return, would scarcely understand our methods and manner of life, and would feel themselves ill at home among us.—And what are

the records of history but the chronicle of the rise and fall of nations through the successive ages of the world's experience.—And within the little sphere of our own existence, incessant change allows no rest to either thought, affection, or will. We gain but to lose; we rejoice but to weep; we live but to die. How often the heart is emptied long before the grave is filled. Death seems envious and impatient of life. Thus we see that nature, history, and individual experience, record the same fact, that all things are subject to, and productive of, constant change.

And what an air of sadness this self-evident fact gives to our life! It begets our earliest sorrows. For in childhood and youth we cling to everything, and deem all to be abiding. Our affections, like the tendrils of plants, seek to give themselves support, by laying hold of the objects around us. And very sad are those early experiences from which we begin to learn that nothing abides, that we lean on breaking reeds, and love but to lose what we love. The little child soon discovers that her flowers, just now so fair, are already fading; the young girl is early called to mourn the blighting of her youthful hopes; and the young man that the strength in which he gloried is

forsaking him. And, as years wear on, confidence becomes broken, expectation lessens, hope declines, and trust in creatures is found to be vain; a feeling of insecurity steals over us which denies us peace, and so fills the mind with fear of foreboded evil, that "even in laughter the heart is sad;" and thus life, which began full of hope and expectation, confiding and restful, finding nothing certain, no creature worthy of trust, but all to be vanity and vexation, is tempted to banish thought, blot out the view of the future, and abandon itself to present sensual delights, saying, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die."

The mind will not dwell with its griefs. The heart refuses life without hope. So that this fact of ceaseless change induces its own abandonment, or arouses the mind to the discovery of some other ground of confidence and rest, if such there be, in the midst of constant change. We must have rest or the hope of it, unless we banish all thought from our life. And what is life without thought! But our text speaks of these changes, this restless action, not only as a constant working, but as a *working together* of all things. Let us see what difference this makes.

2. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER. The addition

of this one word alters everything. It introduces design where there appeared to be no aim; order where all seemed chaos; and a matured plan where there seemed no purpose: so that now "nothing walks with aimless feet;" everything has its appointed way, occupies a given place, and exercises a prepared and regulated influence. Nothing exists merely for itself or stands apart; everything is associated with all things, is a part of the whole, a link in the great chain, and not to be regarded as isolated and standing alone. This co-operation of all things requires us to look at everything in the light of its governing law and final purpose. And thus viewed, its character is altered. For instance, winter is seen to have a necessary place and work in relation to summer; night stands in essential relation to day; the desert places have their uses with respect to our fruitful fields; the high mountains stand in charge of the valleys. In short, the earth is one, and made up of contradictory elements, opposite climates, and all latitudes and longitudes. The year is one, and requires all the seasons. The day is one, and composed of morning, noon, and evening.—In like manner, the course of history is made up of all the forms of human life and every

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variety of experience, so that conflicting events, and the most incongruous elements, are made to work together in subordination to the one purpose. Scarcity and abundance; war and peace; ignorance and knowledge; every form of government and disorder; all manner of religions and irreligions—all have had their influence in the opening to man's feet of that way in which, from the beginning to the end, may be traced the footsteps of God.—And so, within the little circle of our personal experience, what a strange mixture of elements, what a variety of conditions, relations, and circumstances, in ever-varying combinations, have entered into the composition of our individual lives! And these three—nature, history, and individual experience—to which we have given a passing glance, are not three, but one. The Divine purpose embraces all. They are but spheres of co-operative agencies carrying out the one purpose which runs through all ages. "Of Him, through Him, and to Him, are all things," "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

3. BUT TO WHAT PURPOSE, TO WHAT END DO ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER? Our text answers —"all things work together *for good*." This is no

mere conjecture—nor simply the assertion of an inspired Apostle, but a necessary deduction from the fact we have been considering. Our faith in this statement receives the confirmation of reason, observation, and experience.

If all things do "work together," then good *must* be the result. For evil has no power of co-operation. Evil elements cannot be combined; they are antagonistic to each other. One could sooner make a rope of sand than weave together the threads of concerted evil. Many are the devices of ignorance and wickedness, but only the Lord's counsels stand. Within even the narrow limits of the temporary plots for which wicked men combine, it is found necessary to set up the principles of goodness and righteousness. There must be "honesty among thieves," truth among liars, honour among reprobates, or their devices can have no chance of even a temporary success. The means employed and the principles recognised among wicked men, as necessary for their co-operation, are antagonistic to the ends for which they combine. The light by which they go astray is light from heaven. And it is the power of this admitted but opposed light which explodes every

plot and makes it simply impossible for a course of combined wickedness to perpetuate itself. Evil, like a parasitic plant, brings about its own destruction in proportion to the vigour of its life.

But the working together of all things implies nothing less than the presence of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power: *goodness* in the very elements of things as well as in their embodied intention, aim, and purpose; *wisdom*, which, as the eye and practical intelligence of goodness, sees the end from the beginning and knows how to reach it; and *power*, the moral energy of both goodness and wisdom, which, as their right hand, subordinates everything to the one purpose, and makes all things work together for its accomplishment. This preordained purpose will only be fully revealed in the *end;* in the *way* to the end there will be much of human arbitrariness, which will tend to hide it, much that is wilful as well as wise, much to reveal man as well as God. The way, however, of goodness carries its security, for the attainment of its end, in its own moral power. The purpose of goodness cannot fail of accomplishment. For the *true* nature of everything is in accordance with the will, the way, and the work of God. But

evil is "vanity;" and the way of evil "a vain show;" and the end "less than nothing and vanity."

In the midst of the nations God has His people in and by whom He fulfils and carries out the purpose of His goodness. "Of Zion," the Lord hath said "Thou art my people;" but "all nations before Him are as nothing; and are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity." In view of the end for which all things are working together, they are of no account. To God, Jerusalem, "set in the midst of the nations and countries round about her," is the determining centre of the earth, and there is nothing which has an abiding place and exercises any real influence, which is not within its circumference. It is His city, and stands for Him, in Whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," and to Whom he has "given all power" to "subdue all things unto Himself," and in Whose hands He has placed the government until all things shall be brought into a rich, full, and harmonious oneness of Being.

It is this co-operation of all things for His purpose that has often led men to liken the Providence of God to a Divine chemistry. For as in a mixture of chemical elements, while the process of combination

is going on, you may be utterly at a loss to know what the result will be, until, the last element being added, it is made manifest; so is it with the Providence of God. Joseph in the pit, or in the prison, is a great mystery, but Joseph at the head of the government of Egypt, in the midst of famine, filling his father's sacks with corn, makes it all plain. Rather, however, let us habituate ourselves to regard the Providence of God as carried on by the personal power of His presence, a power, therefore, of quickening as well as of combining elements; of intensifying as well as of moderating their action; a power of new beginnings as well as of terminating forces and agencies long in exercise. It is the moral power of His wisdom over and throughout the whole sphere, for the accomplishment of the purpose of His goodness. It is what, and more than what, the will of man is to his whole body as well as to every separate part. The Providence of God exercises a power of arresting or of intensifying action at pleasure; of obviating the natural consequences of the operation of elements and forces which would interfere with His plan, by bringing about new combinations; and thus of securing results other than those which would issue

from the united action of the constituted forces of nature and powers of men. God is not an exhausted Deity, neither is He under bondage to the forces and powers which He has conferred upon His creatures. Evermore He abides Creator, holding His creation in His hand, and adds to it or takes from it at pleasure. With Him there ever remains an infinite reserve of ways and means by which to "do according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will." The power of His presence runs through all spheres, is hidden in all elements, and underlies all intelligence. Through these hidden channels He exercises His will and sways the creation as it pleases Him. "All wait on Him. He sends forth His Spirit, they are created. He takes away their breath, they die and return to their dust." There is no mountain height which He does not surmount, no depth which He does not fathom, no chasm which His presence does not bridge, and no gulf fixed, but that which the sovereign power which He has conferred upon the individual will, fixes for itself. But our wilfulness cannot carry itself beyond the limits

of our own nature. By His gift our wills are ours to determine our own destiny; indeed, the nature of that destiny requires our own determination; but beyond ourselves He makes our might impotent, and our "devices of none effect."

4. BUT, IF ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD, THEN ALSO FOR THE BEST. Divine goodness has but one end for the same creature, and that is the best possible. His mind can only purpose the best in relation to the creature concerned. And to reach His end, He has but one way, and that is the best. Men may often be heard to speak as though there were many ways of doing the same thing; but, only because of their ignorance. Science knows there is but one way of doing anything truly, just as there is but one straight line between two points; and even a shrewd common sense sometimes says, "Man, there is but one way of doing that." How impossible, then, that "the only-wise God" should have for His children any end, or any way to that end, but the best!

That one absolutely perfect, highest, and best end is seen in His only-begotten Son, who is at once Son of man and Son of God; "of Whom, through Whom, and to Whom, are all things." "Out of Bethlehem He

came forth, Whose goings forth have been from of old—from everlasting,"—for Whom "all things are, and were created," and for Whose central glory man's Redemption was purposed from eternity, but reserved for accomplishment till "the fulness of time" of these "last days," that He might "gather up all things in One," and in that One for ever unite His glory and our salvation. How clearly the initial fulfilment of this is seen if we look back to the advent of Christ—when Bethlehem becomes the centre to which all the lines of previous history converge, and from which diverge the lines of Christian history, which are obviously running out to the ends of the earth, and determining the history of the whole world! Call to mind the elements, forces, and powers which were brought into co-operation around the spot where "the Holy Child" was born! Earth and Heaven; Egypt and Jerusalem; Gentile and Jew; the devout from among the heathen, and those who waited for Redemption in Israel; men and angels; the Magi and the shepherds; Herod and Joseph; good and evil spirits; dreams and visions—all are seen working together round about the Virgin's child—the Holy One of God. "The eyes which run through the

whole earth" were here concentrating all influences and all powers; and, by the concentration of so many lines of light, revealing the Sun, which had been the hidden source of all illumination during the night of the world, but was now awaking the morn that is destined to chase away all darkness, and lead in the perfect day of Life, and Light, and Love, in which all things shall for ever work together, and work out their highest good.

5. BUT, FOR WHOM WILL THIS CO-OPERATION OF ALL THINGS WORK OUT ITS HIGHEST GOOD? "*For those who love God.*" There can be but one absolute way of good for an intelligent creature, who is made in the image, and is the offspring of God; and this way must be alike for all, for God is "no respecter of persons." Our individual inheritance cannot arbitrarily be bestowed; "to sit at my right hand, and on my left is not mine to give," said Christ, but requires an individual preparation and fitness. Every one will receive his own place, and go to his own company.

And, as there can be but one way of good for all intelligent creatures, it is not difficult to see that this way must have respect to, and be based upon, some

one simple, radical, and all-determining principle on which their well-being depends. What is that one principle? We answer: A rightly-directed state of the affections. The well-being of an intelligent creature is not so much dependent on what he has, or upon what he thinks, as upon what he loves. The affections are the deep seat of being. A man is what, and as he loves; and, in order to his well-being, he must rightly love the right object. God is the only object of a creature's love—God in everything, and everything in God—God above everything, and everything from God.

The highest good can only be received by rightly-directed affections. As it proceeds from the love of the Creator, it can only be received by the love of the creature. Only love can take up the issue of this universal co-operation, which is working out what the eternal love has purposed. For, just as a piece of mechanism cunningly devised, to weave a pattern of marvellous beauty, may require a thread of a given quality and texture to receive its design, so the highest purpose of the Divine love, to be wrought out by the co-operation of all things, can only be taken up by, and embodied in, the affections

of His children. For, as His purpose is spiritual, it requires spiritual embodiment; as it is holy, it requires holiness; as it is free, it requires to be chosen; as it is merciful, it requires vessels of mercy; as it is personal, it requires personality; as it is social, it requires a society of individuals; as it is not only from, but of God, it requires godliness; and, as it is an all-embracing unity—a rich, full, and lasting oneness of Being—to which God freely gives *Himself*, it requires in those who partake of it the exercise of the love which He bestows that He may become their inheritance, Who thus empowers them to enter into the glory of His Light, and to wear the Crown of His Love.

But, it may be asked, if God foresees, foretells, provides for, and fulfils all, "according to the good pleasure of His will," what is this but fate and necessity, so far as man is concerned? Let me, first of all, in replying to this question, call to mind the fact that the Word of God, which teaches us His foreknowledge and predetermined purpose, also most strikingly reveals to us the place which human freedom has in His government, as that of a real power, which He not only bestows but respects, in the midst of all the

appointed and constituted forces of nature, so that, so far at least as the teaching of the Bible is concerned, necessity and fate are clearly excluded. For instance, does not Solomon say that for everything there is an opportunity, for every purpose a time, though, as temporal, it has its appointed limits. Then, let me remind you of the choice given to David by the prophet Gad, of his own punishment for numbering the people, one of three things—"Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now, advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me." And David said unto Gad, "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man." How different must the course of history have been had he chosen otherwise than he did, as he was free to do! So likewise when Hazael, king of Syria, was "cutting Israel short," and ravaging the country far and near, the aged prophet Elisha, wishing to give the king of Israel a token of the measure of his future triumphs over Syria, bade him smite the ground with his arrows, and

he did so, but he only smote three times. "Whereas," says Elisha, "thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." Here again we are clearly and strikingly taught that there is abundant room not only for the exercise of man's will, but for its capricious exercise. And there may be this room for his wilfulness without lessening the certainty of the predicted issues of the Divine government; for if there is room for human caprice, is there not much more room for the Divine freedom, room everywhere, always, and in everything? The government of God is carried on no less by His free Presence, with all His reserve of infinite resources, than by His immanent power in all the laws and life of the universe. Sometimes He carries it on by the help of His creatures, sometimes without their aid, and sometimes in the face of their most determined opposition. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; and the remainder shalt Thou restrain." By His universal Presence within and without His creation as a whole, and in all its parts, He is able to influence all action so as either to arrest, restrain, and modify, or

to quicken, augment, and intensify it; to combine or bring into collision the various forces of nature, among themselves, or with the powers of human nature; as well as to increase and lessen them at pleasure by creation and destruction. The appointed course, or constituted nature of things, within themselves, need not be directly interfered with, and yet may be so acted upon as to bring forth results altogether new and impossible, apart from such supernatural action. Thus, to call to mind a familiar illustration, the Russian invasion by the great Napoleon is seen to have been made, whilst an inevitable fatality is being prepared to frustrate its purpose, in the extraordinary severity of the winter. So likewise the so-called "Invincible Armada" is sent forth only to meet its doom in the storms which arose to scatter and destroy it. "God does not burst through the appointed course of things, and yet so arranges their relative movements as that a specific and peculiar moral occasion shall be served by their collision. Canaan's wickedness came to a ripeness, and a nation was supernaturally commissioned to tread this bloody vintage. The wickedness of Pompeii is ripening also, and there is also a Divine commission to avenge it; given, however, to no

intelligent agent, nor by any preternatural intervention. The chemistry of the Creator works on in the bowels of the earth, mustering fire and explosive force; and, on the surface of the earth, the wickedness of the city works on. Neither knows the other: God knows both. Now the abomination is full: now also the subterranean fermentation is complete, and the mine is sprung, and unclean Pompeii is overwhelmed by its discharge." Thus are we taught His presence and power, Who, whilst respecting the forces He has called into existence, and the powers He has conferred upon His children, "doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth;" thus "He scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts," and "maketh the devices of the people of none effect," and "bringeth forth His righteousness as the light and His judgment as the noon-day," to "the terror of evil doers," and the establishment of the just; and thus, too, He is causing "all things to work together for the good of them that love Him."

As the key for the interpretation of the entire history of the Presence of God in the world, we have the Advent of Christ at the very darkest hour,

and amid the deepest depth of human degradation, turning the hour of doom into the hour of deliverance, and making "man's necessity God's opportunity."

What a view is here opened up of the riches and grandeur of that final unity which is the constant aim and certain end of the working together of all things! What a breadth of nature it presupposes in man that he should be capable of receiving and embodying the wondrous results of this universal co-operation! What a quality is given to man's chief good, what an exalted character to "man's chief end," by the fact that everything is made to contribute to it! And what a consummation for those who love God to find as their inheritance—the best that any creature can receive and that God can bestow!

Through all the various shifting scene
Of life's mistaken ill or good,
Thy hand, O God, conducts unseen
The beautiful vicissitude.

Thou givest with a Father's care,
Howe'er unjustly we complain,
To each his necessary share
Of joy and sorrow, health and pain.

All things on earth, and all in heaven,
On Thy eternal will depend ;
And all for greater good were given,
Would man pursue the appointed end.

Be this my care ; to all beside
Indifferent let my wishes be—
Passion be calm, and dumb be pride,
And fixed my soul, great God, on Thee !

SERMON VI.

CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, October 2, 1859.)

MATTHEW xxvii. 26-51; MARK xv. 15-37; LUKE xxiii. 24-47; JOHN xix. 16-31.

"And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required, and delivered Jesus to be crucified; . . . and as they led Him away there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which . . . bewailed and lamented Him; . . . and when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him; . . . and the people stood beholding; . . . and the rulers derided Him; . . . and the chief priests mocked Him; . . . and the soldiers mocked Him; . . . and they that passed by reviled Him; . . . and one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him; . . . and all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things; . . . and by His cross stood His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene . . . and the disciple whom Jesus loved; . . . and when the Centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned."

CHRIST on the cross is our subject. You know His history. And when you read, "The people stood beholding," you will be ready to add—and no

wonder. Here before their eyes was the tragic consummation of a life that was begotten by the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, and signalised at its birth by the homage of both heaven and earth. Angels sang His advent, and called the shepherds to worship, while a star led the Magi to His feet. From infancy He who made His entrance into the world in the place of cattle, and whose tender limbs found their first resting-place in a manger, grew in favour with God and man. In early years He gave evidence of wisdom astonishingly free from the prejudices of birth and parentage, of home and nationality. In childhood, while subject to His parents, He exercised an influence among rulers. He became early conscious of His mission and destiny, and the power of their sublime grandeur made every temptation weak, every labour easy, every sorrow light, and every sacrifice a pleasure. His course was straight, and His life without hesitation. For He had no choice to exercise that caused a moment's reluctance, no decisions to make at which His will paused, and no collisions of duty which gave hesitancy to His life. Being without guile within, His life was pure without. He made no false steps; no words but those of truth

escaped His lips. He had no deviations to retrace, and no errors to correct. He was without repentance, because free from sin, and His life without regret, because free from folly.

His nature was singularly complete. No one of the constitutional temperaments usually distinctive and characteristic of other men is seen in Him, for all of them are resolved in the perfect completeness of His manhood. In Him you see the unanxious calm of a disposition that leaves the morrow to care for itself, and enjoys the brightness of the passing hour as the lily of the field the sunshine, the birds of the air the breath of spring, or a child its mother's smile. But no less do you find in Him the most tender susceptibility and boundless sympathy reaching to the depths of all suffering and sin, of woe and death, which made Him a man of sorrows beyond compare. In Him the prophet's lament is fulfilled, "Come see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." He led a lonely life, though He was not indifferent to the companionship and sympathy of those about Him. In His hour of woe, when resorting to His Father in prayer, He begs His disciples not to forsake Him, "Tarry ye here and watch with Me." He possessed a depth of

unmeasured peace, and yet could be so incensed, that His disciples remembered that it was written of Him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." But no one of these features was in excess. All His aptitudes were in due proportion combined in an all-embracing perfection of nature and character.

This completeness of nature displays itself in a corresponding harmony of life. Though of Jewish birth, He was free from bigotry, and wedded to no class-opinions. In His life there was no excess nor defect, no exaggeration nor narrowness. It presents a complete sphere of beautiful virtue and devout piety, in which all qualities find room for equable adjustment, and contribute to an intenser harmony. He was possessed of a manly heroism of spirit, which, however, never once dulled the womanly sensibilities of His soul. Though not intimidated before kings, a little child could ever move His heart. He was unworldly in disposition, devout in mind, and spiritual in converse; but without losing interest in the affairs of home, or the festive enjoyments of social life. He contributed to the feast of Cana; He loved the home at Bethany. His meat and His drink were to do the will of His Father, but it nevertheless pleases Him to

turn the water into wine at the feast. He patiently endured temptation—"*suffered* being tempted," but there is in Him not a trace of unnatural rigour or hardness. His life, though having a progressive development, was without fault and blameless, and yet the woman taken in sin found a sanctuary in His presence. He could associate with sinners, and yet maintain a purity and goodness, the brightness of which, as a mirror, discovered to the best their shame. And while it was the privilege of the disciple whom He loved to lean upon His bosom, we must not forget that Judas was among those whose feet He washed. At night He often watched and worshipped on the mountain height, and sought relief from the solitude He found among men in the fellowship of heaven. And yet, with thoughts drawn from the bosom of the Father, His teaching does not overlook the flowers of the field, or the sparrow which falls from the roof. If, without irreverence, we may speak of gifts or talents in relation to One who was the personal embodiment and manifestation of Him in Whom all fulness dwells, and from whom all gifts descend, and by whom all endowments are bestowed, we must say His life is not the especial display of genius, or

prophetic fire, or legislative power, or heroic action. His life does not resemble that of Moses, nor Joshua, nor David, nor Isaiah, because it embraces all the virtues that distinguished each of them, at a depth where these differences are indistinguishable in their ground, and carries them to a height in which they are resolved in an all-embracing glory. His life is the expression of a quiet gentleness and ease, as of the union of all powers in harmony and peace. His was the lowly meekness which is great before God. And because of His own deep calm of meekly descended might, He could invite the weary and heavy-laden to His bosom as to the rest and home of their spirits, "Come unto Me; I am meek and lowly of heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls."

Further—His life displays the *principles* of *all* virtue and holiness—not their development in detail; this had been impossible. For this reason he did not enter into any one of the particular relations of life, nor follow any one of its occupations. He was neither a husband nor a father, for His exhibition of human life was to be without sexual and individual distinctions. He followed no given trade nor profession, that He might the better illustrate

the principles of duty in all. His was the exhibition of life, at the depth where all distinctions of individual duties, duties restricted to time and place, vanish, while the universal and abiding are brought to light. He is not so much an example for our imitation in the letter of His life, as the embodied principle and self-interpreting spirit of all duty, in all places, and in every age.

Notwithstanding such an inward fulness of perfect Being, but indeed because of it, His life was full of grief and trouble. His countenance was marred; He was a man of sorrows; grief was His acquaintance. For while His own soul was clear as a morning without clouds, He ever shared the lot of those who sat in darkness, that He might lessen their gloom. And although His own heart poured forth no bitter waters, it was ever open to share the griefs of others. And while the tempter's arrows were shot at Him in vain, save that He learnt thereby to prove their power, His own unbroken strength poured itself forth in sympathy with all the wounded and fallen. He was without selfishness, though the strong and mighty centre of all self-hood. He lived not to Himself, but gave His life in service to all.

And yet He was deemed unfit to live. Not that any one could truly accuse Him of anything false, or unkind, or unjust, but because the false world hated Him. Not that He was covetous or ambitious, but because He was a living reproof of all covetousness and ambition. Not that He was an enemy to any, for He loved every one, and sought to do good to all; but because He was a man, and would not be a Jew; because He served God in spirit, regardless of the traditional opinions and practice of those who were dead under the killing influence of the letter emptied of the spirit; because He exercised a love void of prejudice, and without respect of person. Jewish priestly ignorance of, and blindness with respect to the life which alone could fulfil the letter they held so sacred but found so burdensome, hated Him, and, strange to say, combined with Roman hatred of all that was Jewish, to put Him to death. Disappointed ambition turned to treachery as the only means of making anything out of a cause which now seemed inevitably doomed, betrayed Him. Judas, self-condemned, and soon to be the executioner of His own self-condemnation, delivered Him to His enemies. Suborned witnesses gave perjured evidence against

Him. And while justice from the Roman judgment-seat repeatedly pronounced Him innocent, personal considerations moved the Roman judge, instigated by the religious fanaticism of a mob, to deliver Him up to be put to death.

We have now reached His last days. It was but as on Thursday, that He ate with His disciples that last supper; and washed their feet; and poured out His soul in so many words of gracious consolation in anticipation of their impending trial and sorrow; that He sought at night the garden for prayer, where He travailed in agony till he triumphed in spirit; that the traitor betrayed Him with a kiss; that He was hurried off to the High Priest and accused, and examined before a selected committee of the council while it was yet night, and adjudged worthy of death on the ground of blasphemy; that during the remainder of the night He was exposed to the scorn, and buffeting, and degrading contumely of the servants of the court, and those in charge of Him; that He was blindfolded, and mocked, and smitten, and spat upon; now, too, it was, that Peter denied His Lord; that with the early light of the morning He was condemned by the full council, carried before

Pilate, examined, found to belong to Herod's jurisdiction, and hurried off to him; that He was here again set at nought, mocked, derided, and sent rudely back to Pilate; that He was at last sentenced, scourged, clothed in a soldier's garment in mockery, crowned with thorns, and led forth to be crucified, bearing His cross until He could no longer bear it nor Himself—His fainting body being unequal to its own weight; that arriving at the place of execution He was stript of His clothes, and crucified between two thieves.

The people stand beholding. In the distance the women of His acquaintance, and of Jerusalem, whose presence presents the fidelity of *their* love in striking contrast with that of the great body of His disciples, who, with one exception, had all forsaken Him and fled. Then there were the rulers, the priests, and the scribes, keeping at a cold and scornful distance for observation, the subjects of deep commotion of mind and heart—malicious hate in conflict with self-recriminating justice. Nearer were stationed the Roman soldiers, the representatives of Jewish bondage, and the executioners of Jewish malice, alike indifferent to the feelings of Jesus and of the Jew, occupying

themselves in estimating the value of His garments, and how they should be divided among them. Near the cross is the disciple whose love had overpowered his fears and sustained his hope—even in this dark hour of woe. At His side stood one whose anguish had ere this sent her to her rest, had not the mother's love been too strong to die. And while grief, as a sword, pierces her soul, beaming hope lights up her tears at the remembrance of the things treasured up in her heart. "It is night—night—night," she says in her heart, "but the dawn must surely soon break." Then here, and there, and everywhere are the restless rabble of common Jews, with no feeling deep enough to keep them quiet—maintaining a low, degraded indifference, and deepening the awful silence by their vulgar mirth.

We have now passed in rapid review the life and character of Jesus; the treatment He received at the hands of those for whom He lived and laboured—their heartless, impious, brutal, and devilish conduct throughout the mockery of trial, the iniquitous sentence, and its blood-thirsty execution. And now let us, for a moment, see how He who had so lived and laboured was able, in such circumstances, in the

presence of His murderers, to die. Let His own last words teach us this.

"The tongues of dying men
Enforce attention, like deep harmony;
Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain;
For they breathe truth, that breathe their words in pain."

But how are we to speak of those last, long hours through which He hung upon the cross? What fitting words have we with which to note the progress from mortal agony to immortal joy? Rather let us be silent, that His own Royal words may discover to us the double way He travelled—of vanquishment to the death He died once, and of triumph to the life He lives for evermore—*that* way in which while His bodily sufferings abate through the increasing weakness in which He grows faint, and in faintness dies; in spirit He summons up His strength, and wrestles on till death is swallowed up of life. His own words alone befit these last hours—words of merciful intercession, as He prays for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" words of compassionating assurance, as He tells the dying penitent, "To-day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" words of filial comfort to His mother, and confiding trust to

His beloved disciple, as He bids her receive in him a son, and entrusts to him His mother; words with which He enters upon the mysterious hour of the power of permitted darkness, which hides from Him the Father's countenance, "*My God, My God*, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" words of humble confession of physical exhaustion, as He cries, "I thirst," united, however, to His declaration that the work of His life was done—"It is finished;" words of filial trust when bowing His head to give up the ghost, as one having power to die, He cried with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

It is no marvel that the simple narrative adds, "When the centurion which stood over against Him saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man," "truly this was the Son of God." "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned home."

What think we of Him? Who can doubt that, among all the sons of men, He only is "*the* Son of Man?"—humanity's root and flower. That in Him all men are united in their ground and head. That,

from the first Adam, men inherit folly, and sin, and death—that, in the second, they find wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, in Christ, Humanity stands before God not merely as Redeemed, but as the true end of creation —the consummation of human history and Being.

But if, among the sons of men, He only is "*the* Son of Man," it can only be because, among all the sons of God, He only is "*the* Son of God," embodying and representing the fulness and glory of God as He embodies and represents the fulness and glory of man. He is the God-man—the Mediator between, and the meeting-place of God and His mankind. One, therefore, in whom the sin of man, meeting the holiness of God, is so atoned for that the stream of justice which flows upon Him a stream of anguish and blood and death, flows from Him a stream of mercy, bearing life, and peace, and blessedness to a sinful world.

Let us learn, my brethren, to regard His death as sin's great act, as the culminating deed of sinful development in the world's history. The spiritual and worldly powers unite to crucify the Holy One of God. It is more than Caiaphas and Pilate, who combine to

nail Jesus to the cross; it is more than the pharisaical spirit of unbelieving Judaism, which sought to idolize itself in the letter of the law, combined with the spirit of worldly dominion, that saw in the Roman Emperor an earthly god, which put Jesus to death. There were also spiritual principalities and powers, in league with the god of this world, engaged in this awful mystery. It was sin's great act. The cross of Christ is a revelation of the sin and guilt of the whole world.

But, wonder of wonders—if it is sin's great act, it is also sin's great cure. The death of the cross, which is the world's condemnation, is the atonement for the world's sin. The cross, which is a monument of the world's doom, is also a standard of the world's deliverance.

The sin which crucified the Saviour is, therefore, our sin. Let us fear lest its righteous punishment be our doom. But the Saviour, crucified for sin, is also our Saviour. Let us hope, then, in His mercy, believing that, "if One died for all, then all died; and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

SERMON VII.

THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY.

(Preached on Sunday Evening, August 19, 1860.)

JAMES, i. 23-26.

"For if any man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

A CAPACITY for self-knowledge is one of our distinctive endowments. We have no reason to suppose that other creatures are capable of knowing themselves.

This distinctive capacity implies a duty. "Know thyself," we are told, is a precept that descended from Heaven. But, whatever its origin, it speaks with the highest authority. It is self-commended. We feel

that all our endowments are wedded to corresponding duties—that the ability to know ourselves obliges us to cultivate self-knowledge.

And this duty is a great privilege. "The study of mankind is man." Our own nature is necessarily central to all our studies. And in this, as in other respects, we are "made in the image and likeness of God." In the capacity for this joy of self-knowledge, He has given us the means of attaining, in creature-measure, His own joy—invested us with the power of the self-formation and self-improvement of our characters, so that our joy may be a growing pleasure—increasing with every victory won over self—a flowing river destined to become in its blessed fulness as the waves of the sea. By this capacity of self-knowledge we are made responsible; called upon to become the authors of our own characters and destinies. Self-knowledge conditions and imposes the responsibility of self-formation and self-possession.

For this self-knowledge we are furnished with abundant means. The universe, as a Revelation of God, is a mirror for man. Nature, as in a book, presents us with a picture of ourselves. The water reflects our face, the earth wears our shadow, and all

things, throughout all their changes, form a language for the expression of human experience. And, as in the works of God, we have the means of knowing ourselves *as we are*, so, in the Word of God—the Revelation of His Will—we have a glass in which to see ourselves *as we ought to be.*

But how strange it is that, possessing such a mirror, we make so little use of it! With all our self-love, how is it that we are not only indifferent to, but even shrink from a genuine self-knowledge? We seek to know how we appear; we turn away from the knowledge of what we are. Our surface-nature we like to behold — we fear to become acquainted with our depths. Mirrors for our personal appearance we constantly use; but the mirror for our character we almost as constantly avoid. To the glass which reveals our natural face we readily turn, whilst more readily we turn from one which would make us acquainted with our spiritual nature. Our outward manner and appearance we are pleased to look at, but have no pleasure in seeing what manner of men we *are.*

Against the consequences of this ignorance of ourselves, God warns us and urges upon us the duty of a

genuine self-knowledge. In the text we are cautioned against the fatal temptation of paying a merely outward homage to the Word of God without any practical intent, as though hearing it were a lawful pastime, or could be pleasing to God, or of any avail to us apart from its embodiment in our will, our words, and our works. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For, if any man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man who casually looks at himself in a glass; and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh—with patient discernment—into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in all he does."

My brethren, this Word is spoken in our hearing that it may be sown in our hearts the "engrafted Word," to live and grow there until it engross our whole nature, so that it be no more we that live, but the Word Christ-Jesus living in us. We are exhorted to look into it that it may awaken us to a sense of our bondage, until we cry —"O! wretched that we are; who shall deliver us from this body of sin and death?" "For, the Word of God

is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Christ, Who was this Word, exhorted those who listened to Him to "take heed how they heard." "If I had not come and spoken to them," He says, "they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."

In a spirit becoming those who have received such an exhortation, let us hear and look into this "living Word," that "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as of the Lord, the Spirit," that it may become to us "the perfect law of liberty," "the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ." For "the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." The following little chain of thought will present to us the several suggestions of the text.—1. *Let us consider what is meant by the expression, "the Word," used emphatically for "the Word of God."* 2. *Let us look upon this Word as a "glass," or mirror.* 3. *A mirror which reveals a law as well as reflects a life.* 4. *A law which is*

perfect, and possessed of the power of life. 5. *A life of blessed liberty.*

1. FIRST OF ALL WE DIRECT OUR ATTENTION TO THE WORD WE ARE EXHORTED TO HEAR AND DO.—It is emphatically called "the Word," "the Word of God," or, as in the connection of the text, "the Word of the Truth," or, in another Scripture, "the Word of the Truth of the Gospel," as "Truth is in Jesus."

Words are wonderful—as expressions of thought and feeling, reason and will. Our life takes shape and colour, warmth and energy in words. Words exhibit the action of our minds, make audible the thought of our hearts, and embody for the senses the life of our souls.

It is by words we have fellowship one with another. Words are winged messengers between soul and soul, which, regardless of the barriers of our separate and separately embodied indviduality, in their own wonderful way, bring heart to heart and mind to mind.

The Word of God brings God to us. In His Word we have the mind of His Spirit clothed in forms apprehensible by our senses. It is the record of

His Mind and Will concerning us. "At various times, and in divers manners, God spake in times past by the Prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." Many messengers, bearing timely words, through many ages, prepared the way for the words of "these last days."

The Word of God is the outward form of an abiding spiritual force; once uttered, it remains a spiritual power always, and everywhere working according to His will.

The word of God "liveth and abideth for ever." It is now as quick and powerful as at the moment it first gave form to the breath of His mouth.

"The Word of God," is the name of His only-begotten Son, who, at "the fulness of time," "came out from God, and came into the world," to reveal to us the Father, and make known to us in words of "spirit and life," His will. His name, as "the Word of God," is one with His nature. This final revelation of the Will of God has its verbal embodiment in the words of the Gospel, its incarnation in Jesus, its abiding spiritual power in the Holy Spirit. As heard it addresses the ear, as seen it appeals to the eye, as felt it moves in the heart. "This word is nigh thee," God

said to Moses, "in thy mouth and in thy heart;" and Paul adds, in quoting this passage—"that is the Word of faith which we preach." In the letter it is a form of instruction, in the spirit it is a principle and power of life. As a form of instruction answering to and in agreement with the active energy of the Divine mind, it seeks to awaken the mind, and direct the attention to the latent powers of its own life, sown in the heart, that there may be an open way for the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit. Through the Word "given by inspiration of God," the power of the Spirit reaches the unquickened seed of the Divine Life in man; and "the dead in trespasses and sins" are "begotten," "quickened," and "born again" by it, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever;" and, to those "born of God," it "is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

It is to this Word, my brethren, "which is able to make wise unto salvation," we are exhorted to "take heed how we hear." The writer to the Hebrews tells them that "the Word preached did not profit them,

not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." To be addressed by it is a great privilege, and an opportunity of life. Not to hear when it speaks to us is to burden ourselves with an aggravated responsibility. The ministry of the Word places us under an obligation to hear and believe that we may live.

We may, however, sum up all we have said, or may have to say of this Word, in the words of John at the beginning of his first epistle—"that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of *the* Word of Life; for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Such is the Word which we preach. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

2. THIS WORD OF GOD IS SPOKEN OF IN OUR TEXT AS A MIRROR, OR GLASS, IN WHICH WE MAY SEE WHAT MANNER OF MEN WE ARE. All words should mirror the mind of the speaker. God is

revealed in His Word. He makes Himself known in all His Words, and Ways, and Works. The heavens and earth proclaim Him; all things and creatures make known His eternal power and Godhead, prophets and holy men of old revealed His will; Jesus, the only-begotten Son, brings Him *personally* out to view; the Bible presents to us the *history* of His self-manifestation.

In the Son of Man we "behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." In Him, the Incarnate Word, man's nature is complete, its idea satisfactorily embodied, the Divine image fully expressed, and God glorified in the world. God is "well-pleased" to see again His own image and likeness in the face of man; and men are called to behold in Jesus, the Word made flesh, "the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In Him the Revelation of God attains its height and full proportions, celebrates its sabbath, while the Words of Jesus complete His person and crown the Words of God. As in His person we see Him Who has been speaking to us from the beginning, so in His Words we have the key for the interpretation of all that has been spoken in His Name.

The Revelations of God are means of self-knowledge for man. The world is man's picture—the picture of his nature in detail and in process of formation. All things have a manward look, a manward tendency, a manward service, and all have their consummation, and find their rest in man. In the works of God, man may see himself and find his different states and conditions shadowed forth; from the ways of God, he may learn the tendencies, working, and issues of his principles and passions; and in the Word of God, he is furnished with a mirror for his mind, heart, and conscience. He that hears the Word is likened to a man "beholding his natural face in a glass." The Word presents a mirrored face of what man ought to be, and not only the ideal of what he ought to be, but also the image of what he really is. It discerns and reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart. The shadow of the beholder, as he is, is thrown upon the bright image of what he ought to be. The true form in the Word, as a glass, reflects the false form of the beholder, which it judges and condemns. The mirror of the Word judges the shadow of what we are by receiving it upon the fair image of what we

ought to be. Every reader of the Word feels this—feels that his eye meets an Eye which judges him by revealing him in the light of what he should be—just as a cloud is revealed on the fair face of the sky or a spot on the sun.

3. THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT ONLY A MIRROR, BUT ALSO A LAW. The Word of God which is compared to a mirror in the 23rd verse, is called a law in the 25th verse, that is to say, the ideal of our life presented in the mirror of the Divine Word is felt to be a law to the life which beholds it. He who looks into the Divine Word reads not merely advice and counsel, but law, finds that he is addressed imperatively by a law which requires us *to be* and not merely to do, which says, "*be true*," and not merely "act truly;" "*love righteousness*," and not merely "do what is lawful and right." The law commands, presents obligation, awakens conviction, points to its sanction, but does not enforce compliance. Force belongs not to the moral sphere. The capacity to obey is a capacity to suffer for disobedience, but one which is intolerant of force. Obedience is of the heart which is the very seat and soul of liberty.

The discovery of our defects by the law which

judges them, awakens a feeling of culpability, self-condemnation and exposure to punishment. We feel that defect and disobedience with respect to this law are not misfortunes but sins, hence a sense of blameworthiness. Were they our misfortune we might regret them and pity ourselves, but not blame ourselves. A youthful maiden as she sees herself in a glass may regret that she is not fair and lovely, but she cannot blame herself, nor would she feel the command to be beautiful lawful. But if in conduct, or word, or thought, or feeling she has been untrue and false, she stands condemned by the law of her life and owns it just.

Now, when the idea of life judges the life, when what we ought to be judges what we are, it is manifest that we have fallen from law, and that we are under the law which ought to be under, or rather in us. The law should be nowhere but in the heart, as the insensible government of the life. An unfallen creature corresponds with the idea of its existence. An angel looking into the mirror of the Divine Word would only see an exact correspondence with its own ideal. But when the law of the life of any creature lies without it, or stands over judging and condemning it,

it is clear that the life has fallen from, and is at variance with, its law, which now places it under its sanction. And "the commandment ordained unto life is found to be unto death." On the other hand, "where there is no law there is no transgression." And conversely, where there is no transgression there is no law—no conscience of law, because the law lives in the life. But where the law is felt, as law, the life is already without law. For just as the atmosphere oppresses no body, but an empty one, so the law is only an oppression to the lawless, and God only a burden to the Godless. Being without law, the law is given as a rule of life without us. "The law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." The function of law, as law, is not to give life, but to restrain the lawlessness of those without life, and to impose upon them the restraints necessarily consequent upon sin and sinfulness.

Now, of all laws, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as law, is the most burdensome and oppressive, and for this reason, that it is perfect and pertains to the whole life—allowing no thought, no desire, for a single moment, to be withdrawn from its universal empire. Because of His perfect holiness,

Christ's personal presence was often felt to be intolerable. He was painfully aware of this—Wherefore He said: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." And if the law delivered on Sinai awoke in the Israelites such terror, that they entreated it should not be spoken to them any more, what dread would the Sermon on the Mount awaken, apprehended simply as law, and not as expressing the measure of the help of God's grace for the lawless! For the requirements of this law of the spirit of His life know no limits other than the full measure of its powers, and like Him it is "holy, just, and good." Where Moses says, "Do not kill," Christ says, "Be not angry." Moses says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but Christ says, "Lust not." Moses demands "An eye for an eye," but Christ calls upon us to "Resist not evil." The law of Moses enjoins "Love to our neighbour," but Christ commands us, "To love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us." If the law of Moses is terrible, much more so is the law of Christ. Moses demands deeds, Christ demands desires—His law embraces the whole man, the inner

as well as the outward life, the action of the mind as that of the body, the thoughts of the heart as much as the words of the lips. Well might Paul say, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." But the Word of the Gospel, the perfect law, mirrors forth the *power* and not merely the law of life.

4. LET US NOW ENQUIRE WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS EXPRESSION, "THE PERFECT LAW," AS APPLIED TO THE GOSPEL. ARE NOT ALL LAWS PERFECT? There are many forms of law, all of which have their presupposition in goodness, and have also this in common, that their action is uniform under the same circumstances. Law is the regulative controlling power of that to which it belongs. As an idea, it is necessary to the conception of anything; and, as such, it is the same for the same creature under the same conditions.

Natural law is this governing idea in the form of necessity, and operative as force. Such are all the laws of inorganic matter; such, too, are the laws of vegetable and animal life, at least, for the most part. It may be difficult to determine between what is instinctive and what is rational in some of the higher forms of animal life.

But the law of *intelligent creatures* is presented for reception, not imposed; is a law which commands, but does not necessitate obedience. It pre-supposes freedom and the possibility of obedience being refused. "Its rule is authority, not force. It speaks to assent or choice inviting action, but operating nothing apart from choice. It imposes obligation, leaving to the subject to obey or not, clear of any enforcement, save that of conviction beforehand and penalty afterwards."

Then there is what Paul terms "*the law of the spirit of life,*" which is a free, spontaneous, eager, intense spirit of obedience, not acting within a sphere it is *required* to fill by the imperative of an outward law, but from a central fire of love which anticipates all commands and outstrips all requirements. It is more than moral as belonging to that order of rectitude that needs no law, and yet fulfils all law from a passion of obedience. It is a spirit of devotion to the all-governing Will of its life. This was the service Christ rendered and required. "If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

There is yet another form of law, which is determined, as to its form, by the circumstances, state, and condition of its subjects, in view of the end proposed.

You may call it *the law of the end.* Let me illustrate. A gardener wishes to train a tree in a certain direction, and sees that it will require a certain number of stakes and a given strength of cordage to hold its branches in the required position; in other words, to be a law to it. These requirements, imposed by the purpose, are the law of the end. Their wisdom and value can only be judged of when looked at in relation to the end which they are intended to serve. In like manner, certain forms of ritual and ceremonial, among the Jews, owe their existence, form, and place in their history to the circumstances and condition of the nation, in view of the purposes of God concerning mankind.

But, in addition to these, the text speaks of "the perfect law" in a sense somewhat different from any of them. By the perfect law is meant the Old Testament in its final, completed development—in its purposed, perfect outcome—in "the law of the spirit of life." "The letter which killeth" carried in latent power, in accordance with its purpose, "the spirit which giveth life." What is, therefore, meant by "the perfect law" is "the word of the truth of the Gospel," as the *norm* of Christian life. It is "perfect"

because it attains the end of the law—liberty. For "the word of the truth," as "is truth in Jesus," carries "the law of the spirit of His life," which makes free from "the law of sin and death." "For, what the law could not do in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh—that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The end of the law is attained in the free obedience of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ. And further, the law of the spirit of His life is "the perfect law" as being final, complete, and possessed of the power and the purpose of all law at the height of its excellency—the power of the obedience of life. It pre-supposes other laws, and is spoken of as perfect in the sense of its being final. There is no other law to come after it. It looks back to the Mosaic ritual as the temporary way to its own finality—as a law of "beggarly elements;" an expression, however, not of disrespect or reproach, but one which seems to say those preparatory "elements" were eager for their own abandonment—elements of "mendicant importunity for their fulfilment," crying for that which was perfect

under a sense of their own imperfection. "The word of the truth of the Gospel" is, therefore, "the perfect law," inasmuch as it is the final outcome and embodiment of all that was purposed in, and mediated by, the law of Moses.

It is also perfect in this sense—that all the requirements of God are reduced to simplicity and unity of principle. That which went before was expressed in endless rules and prescriptions—a code of laws instead of the principle of all duty—and after all was but partial and fragmentary. For the law of a life which is free can never be prescriptively expressed. New circumstances, new states and conditions continually arise which no existing precept covers, whilst all that is possible to arise within the whole sphere of life may be embraced under a single principle. "Love God," says this perfect law, "and you will not fail to do His will," for "love is the fulfilling of the law." This is the new and final commandment, the perfect law in a single word—"Love."

And this one principle is, in "the perfect law of liberty," embodied in Life. The law is fulfilled in Christ, lives in Him, is the spirit of His life, and capable of being given to us. "A new commandment

give I unto you," said Christ; "that ye love one another as I have loved you that ye also love one another." "I have given you an example that ye should do to one another as I have done to you." Jesus in His Person, His works, His ways, His words, in His whole history, is the embodiment from which a new Spirit is continually breathed forth upon the world and into the souls of men, which is destined to regenerate and restore our race to its lost place in the realm of being and in the heart of God. We read therefore that before He sent forth His disciples "He breathed upon them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The power of the Spirit of His obedience was given to them as well as the letter of the law of His life. In His Spirit the *law* of life is lost in liberty, and its freedom is the blessedness of a chosen necessity. The exulting profession of the Spirit of Christ is: "I delight to do Thy Will, O God; yea Thy law is within my heart." His Spirit is dutiful in thought and deed from a passion of devotion ever equable in its perfect peace.

5. WE NEED SCARCELY ADD, AFTER ALL THAT

HAS BEEN SAID, THAT THIS "PERFECT LAW," HIDDEN IN THE HEART AS THE VERY SPIRIT OF THE AFFECTIONS, GIVES LIBERTY TO THE LIFE. Law and liberty do but express opposite relations to the same ideal of our nature. When we are dead we are under it as law, but when we live our life is free in the restful, self-satisfied experience of its true and just-proportioned powers. The ideal has become real and enjoys its living fulfilment. And the life which fulfils it loves the measurements and limits of its sphere and is free. For the experience of life when it is governed by love, is freedom, "freedom of the truth," freedom of "the Son," Who is "the Truth;" and "if the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." And when we are free we are so disposed to the governing law of our nature that we are sweetly drawn to all its requirements and instinctively observe all its limitations. The law of liberty is a power of love in the heart, the love of the creature to the Creator, of the child to the Father, of the saved to the Saviour. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to

bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people."

The days here spoken of arrived with the birth of Christ, Who came into the world that the law might appear in life. The spirit of His life was the spirit of love to the lawgiver, and the history of His life a history of perfect obedience. He has therefore "magnified the law and made it honourable." For in Him our nature appears in full possession of the spirit of the law, by the letter of which man had been pronounced "accursed" for not continuing in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. And as He is the second Adam, possessed of the fountain-powers of humanity, mankind in Him are redeemed from the curse of the law, and endowed with the power of its spirit. For "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending

His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by law. But the Scripture concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came we were kept under law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," "whom God sent forth in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." "If the Son therefore made you free" by the gift of His own spirit, "then are ye free indeed."

This is the freedom enjoyed under "the perfect law of liberty," or, as it is termed in another place, "the

royal law." The law is perfect because it is embodied in its own life; it is a law of liberty, because the life in which it is presented is a spirit of love to the Law-giver; and it is a "royal law," because it proceeds from the royalty of the Father's heart, and lives in the loyalty of the child's affections, as a power of "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." It thus liberates from every bondage by a divine captivation, in which the liberty is a necessity hidden in the heart. "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished"—expresses the constraining influence of "the perfect law" of "the spirit of life in Christ." It "behoved Him," from an inner "needs be," to fulfil all the Father's pleasure. But that inner "needs be" was the constraint of filial love which is the liberty of law living in the heart.

He who looks into this law of liberty, who listens to the word of truth with practical intent, is made free by the knowledge of the truth. "The entrance of the Word gives life." It operates upon all the powers of life, and awakens in them desires towards Him Who is the life-fountain. The opening of the Word is the opening of Heaven, the opening of the heart of God

which opens the heart of man. They that hear live. The Word quickens the heart, and opens the eye to behold *Him* Who speaks "as never man spake," and Who, as the "fairest" of the sons of men, "the chiefest among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely One," sweetly charms the whole nature, and from the love-seed in the heart calls forth the love-service of the life to the love-source in God. This is liberty, the liberty of light which quickens a life, whose only inspiration is love. Blessed chain of union between souls and the Father of souls—light, life, love, and liberty.

Let us learn the right use of the Divine Word, viz.: —to give us a true self-knowledge, a knowledge of our double-self, of our true self as revealed in the fair light of God's perfect will, of our false self as seen in the shadow which we cast upon the fair image we behold. This is the first great requisite to see ourselves as we are and as we ought to be.

The second is to listen to the law of life which judges the life we live, to know that the life we lead is condemned by the law of the life we can but approve, and to learn to condemn ourselves by the light which shines in the heart and commends itself to the conscience.

Then having our eyes opened by the light, which we can but approve, to read our own condemnation which we can but confirm—if we abide in the light we shall be led to discern that the light which condemns is the light of His countenance Who loves us, and which has been hidden from us by our own dark shadows, and that our condemnation is made the means of our justification. For the law which condemns brings us to Christ who "of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And being brought to Christ "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as of the Lord the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."

SERMON VIII.

MAN'S REFUGE—A GLORIOUS HIGH THRONE.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, August 11, 1861.)

JEREMIAH xvii. 12.

"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

THE word sanctuary at first meant anything separated and set apart for a holy purpose; later it came to designate a place used exclusively for sacred services; and then we find it used to express one chief end of a sacred place—an asylum—a place of refuge to which the guilty may fly and be safe.

That the sanctuary, or holy place, came to be an asylum or refuge for the guilty can only be accounted for by the ameliorating influences of Religion upon the administration of civil justice. In the presence of the

Supreme Judge, inferior judges are silent. At the shrine of Deity, all human passions are overpowered and restrained. This connection between the sanctuary and the asylum which is seen among the heathen, becomes strikingly manifest among the Jews, in the laws and regulations for their cities of refuge. With the advent of Christ, and the diffusion of His religion, these places of refuge were greatly multiplied and enlarged, and although the growing abuses to which they became subject, long since led to their abolition, those merciful influences of religion on the administration of justice which gave rise to them abide, and continue to grow with its growth.

That the sanctuary, the sacred place—set apart as devoted to the gods, and regarded as inviolably holy, should also have been a place of refuge, an asylum, in which guilty fugitives from the avenging sword of justice might find safety, is, to one's first thoughts, surprising—wonderful.

It would be very interesting to investigate the ground and trace the history of this connection between the sanctuary as the house of God and a refuge for the guilty. But this would lead us too far from

our subject. The result, however, of such an investigation would undoubtedly be to show that the seat of inviolable holiness *must* also be the source of mercy, and that the necessity is not an external one but an internal "needs be;" and that the semi-religious, semi-political connection between the sanctuary as a holy place, and also a refuge for fugitives from the avenging sword of justice, is but an imperfect outer-world manifestation of the eternal ground in God from which we have the temple of His Holiness as a refuge for sinners. Is it not written, "The Lord of Hosts Himself shall be for a sanctuary?" And again, God says concerning His rebellious people, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

Let us, however, to-day take the fact that the sanctuary was also a place of refuge, and use it in the interpretation of our text concerning the refuge man has had from the beginning. And let the following thoughts be the order of our meditation: 1. *Man's refuge is our first consideration; and then,* 2. *That his refuge is a sanctuary;* 3. *That his sanctuary-refuge is a throne;*

4. *A throne which has been exalted;* 5. *And made glorious in the history of its exaltation;* 6. *Which dates from the beginning;* 7. *And then we shall see that these features of the refuge, if it is to be a refuge for man, must centre in a person.*

1. MAN'S REFUGE. No creature so much needs the shelter and defence of a safe hiding-place as man. His sources of danger are more than can be numbered. There is little on his earthly way that is secure to him, and that way itself soon comes to an end. With an infected nature he travels an infested road. Beset with foes, he is in constant need of shelter, and often cries out for deliverance. What so welcome to him as a refuge!

Physically regarded, as possessed of a body over which disease and death reign, how often does he sigh for some asylum, which may furnish a defence against these invaders of life! If there were a spot on earth safe from the inroads of disease and the ravages of death, how thronged with fugitives the way to it would be! But as endowed with the capacity for thought and affection, as a child of hope, fear, love, joy, trust and reverence, from beneath whose feet the very ground of one and all of these seems swept away,

how is he to escape the feeling of terrible desertion and unimaginable dangers, how help crying out for some refuge from "the fightings without, the fears within," and the foes on every side? And, looking still deeper, when we see that he is the subject of a disease deceitful above every other—a disease which pertains to his whole nature—an "incurable wickedness," and when we hear him cry out in anguish of soul, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death,"—who does not rejoice at the very idea of a refuge? And when, as now,* in the midst of war, all evils and wickednesses seem crowded together to make up that gigantic monster of iniquity, to revel in violence and blood, how hard it is not to complain against God, and to demand "wherefore He has made man in vain!" How still harder to believe that there is a refuge for man which has been set up from the beginning!

But in all times of deepest trouble, when human helpers fail and the hour of extremity comes, the strange thing is that the universal instincts of man's nature *do* lead him to look for help, and though he

* This Discourse was preached at a time of war.

passes away apparently unhelped, he does so looking for help.

You may have stood among a crowd, upon the shore, watching some vessel tossed on the tempestuous billows which threatened to overwhelm her, until at length a mighty wave washed over her and swept her clean of every living soul. And as that sea overwhelmed her there arose from the breast of every one of the gazing crowd, "God help them!" Was that prayer an unconscious self-delusion in that moment of agony, or is there help for man in all times of his need? Or you may have known a tender mother parting with the child she was sending forth from home, and knowing what the world is, and what the human heart is, as she crosses the threshold the mother's bosom heaves with the prayer, "The Lord keep my child!" Was that mother's breast mocking her in the hour of anxiety, or is there help and defence for her child go where she may? Or you may have been a child watching through the lone hours of the night the ebbing life of a devoted mother, and as the last deep sigh, which made you motherless, escaped her lips you exclaimed, "Oh, Heaven, receive her!" Was your heart committing a pious fraud upon you

when your distressed soul looked to Heaven that its gate might be open to receive your mother? Or you may have listened to a judge passing the awful sentence which doomed a fellow-creature to death—and whilst telling him there was no longer mercy or hope for him on earth, pointing to Heaven and assuring him of hope and help in God. Was that judge dishonouring his judicial robes, and deceiving that poor wretch by this solemn mockery of pretended mercy, or is there an open door of hope in Heaven for the poor outcasts from earth? And we have all read of the poor thief upon the Cross, turning, whilst paying the last penalty of the law with his life, in penitence to the Saviour and praying, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom;" and we know the gracious answer he received, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Was our Lord deceived in this promise, or did He knowingly deceive the miserable victim of crime in the moment of his extremity? Oh, no—there is help for the helpless, help for the hell-deserving, shelter for the defenceless, a refuge for the outcasts. And our hearts in the extremity of our woe do but instinctive justice to His Mercy whose Grace has made provision for all our wants for every hour of need.

"Oh, no! it is no flattering lure,
No fancy weak nor fond,
When hope would bid us rest secure
In better life beyond.

Nor loss, nor shame, nor grief, nor sin,
Her promise may gainsay;
The voice Divine hath spoke within,
And God did ne'er betray."

"The *just* God," Who is also a "*Saviour*"—Oh, how I love that combination—hath said, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else."

2. MAN HAS A REFUGE. LET US NOW SEE THAT HIS REFUGE IS A SANCTUARY. A refuge is no place to rest or abide in. A place which is only a refuge furnishes but a temporary shelter. Those who seek a refuge are fugitives. They have no thought of making the place they seek a home. To escape from danger is their only thought. To the shipwrecked, a naked rock jutting out of the sea would be a glad refuge from the devouring waves; but, it would not be a refuge long. We soon need to escape from that which is only a refuge. A refuge is not a place to live in.

But a refuge, which is also a sanctuary, a Divine

House, affords not only shelter, but rest, repose, and satisfaction for all we need or can desire. The House of God may well be a home for man. And he who enters such a refuge soon discovers that it will be to him all his desire. The Psalmist, in his fugitive experience, says, "One thing have I desired that will I seek after—that I may dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."

A sanctuary, which is the House of God, must be in perfect relation to our true, deep, original, and eternal nature—must be suitable and satisfactorily agreeable to our whole being. For we, too, may use the words of our Lord and say, "We came forth from the Father, and are come into the world; again, we leave the world, and go to the Father." And, for this reason, that our nature is an out-birth from the Divine; the House of God—the secret place of the Most High—is our only true home, and godliness our only complete, perfect life. How sublimely does that Poet, who, perhaps, more than any other, possessed a heart purged from "the anger of sick minds," and who looked upon man and the world with an eye that, to a great degree, had attained its innocence, sing on this subject:

> "The soul that rises with us—our life's star—
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in complete forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our Home."

But, alas! being here induces such a forgetfulness of ourselves and our home that we have to re-learn the only things worth remembering, and before we discover God to be our home, we make acquaintance with Him as our refuge.

3. BUT, MAN'S REFUGE IS NOT ONLY SACRED, BUT ROYAL. "A GLORIOUS HIGH THRONE IS THE PLACE OF OUR SANCTUARY." The House of God, "the dwelling-place of the Most High," is also the seat and source of all rule, authority, and power. It is a Throne. From which we learn that the House of God, which is man's refuge and home, is its own defence. A throne incapable of its own defence is no longer a throne.

In this sanctuary-refuge, which is also a throne, there is full protection for every fugitive who reaches it. It is "the city of God." "Go round about her; tell her towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks.

For this city is our city; and this God is our God for ever and ever." "The secret place of the Most High" is our refuge; and, "because thou hast made the Almighty thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, nor any plague come nigh thy dwelling." "Under the shadow of the Almighty," man finds a sure defence for the whole breadth of his nature, in the midst of every possible circumstance, throughout the whole course of his history.

The security and defence vouchsafed to him are of the highest character, and inseparable from the nature of the throne, which has become his refuge. The sanctuary-refuge-throne is Holy, and the holiness of the throne is its defence and security. "There *can in no wise* enter into it anything that defileth or maketh a lie." The power of the throne is the defence of man's refuge.

But the throne, which has become man's refuge, is not merely a symbol of power, but also of power surrounded with becoming glory. There is "the pomp which surrounds a throne." The throne gathers up and crowns every excellency. It is a symbol of blessedness crowned at its height, as well as of security—being the very fount of power. The throne

of God, in becoming a refuge, does but display its glory and manifest its power.

4. BUT THIS SANCTUARY-REFUGE-THRONE IS SPOKEN OF AS AN EXALTED THRONE. Man needs a high defence. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," against "the prince of the power of the air," against "the god of this world." But, our refuge towers above all, not only covering the need of our present stature, but of all its future possibilities of growth. It is high enough to embrace not merely man's individual nature, in all its integrity of "body, soul, and spirit," but the whole race—the earliest sons in all the height and might of their experience, together with the latest born in the feebleness of beginning life. And not merely the race of man, for, under its exalted height is gathered together, in one unity of blessed life, all the elect, from the archangel before the throne to the weakest and meanest of the sons of men.

5. AND THIS EXALTED THRONE IS GLORIOUS IN THE HISTORY OF ITS EXALTATION. Its exaltation has not been by might but by right. Righteousness

has been pleased and the law magnified throughout the holy pathway of ascent from a humble refuge to the glorious high throne. That the throne became a refuge has given a hallowed joy to the universe. For the throne is exalted in becoming a refuge. The refuge is within the throne. In becoming a refuge it opened up its inner-glory, a glory so excelling the previous glory of the throne that all the ways of approach to it required enlargement and exaltation. As the King ascends to take possession of His new throne, He exclaims: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors and the King of glory shall come in." If the throne had not become a refuge, a glory would have been hidden —that distinctive central glory, which receives into itself every other glory. The refuge crowns the throne. In becoming a refuge for the destitute, the abandoned, the lost, the throne has revealed the charms of the holy order and eternal righteousness by which triumphant conquests are made over every form of disorder and wickedness. Fugitives from the consequences of violated law, as they enter the refuge become obedient to law; the wicked become

righteous; the sinful are made holy. It is no degraded place which invites and welcomes the degraded. The place which degrades will not retain the degraded. The palace which tempts to excesses turns out its besotted victims. Houses of debauchery and crime do not provide hospitals and penitentiaries for the cure of the diseases and vices they generate. The devil furnishes no home for his devoted children. It is the distinctive glory of God that he has become a refuge for all outcasts and banished ones, none of whom hide, but openly acknowledge and confess the guilty necessity of their flight. This is the confession they make as they run into the refuge: "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against Thee"—and they add, what would seem blasphemous presumption if God had not given it a place in His Word—"Do not abhor us, for thy Name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory: remember, break not Thy covenant with us." The glory of the King of Glory is exalted in His becoming a refuge for lost man. Now, henceforth, and for ever, His refuge-glory is and will be the glory of His reign.

"The King of glory reigns
On Zion's heavenly hill,
Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still."

6. ONE OTHER THOUGHT MUST BE ADDED TO THOSE ALREADY ENUMERATED CONCERNING OUR REFUGE, NAMELY, THAT IT HAS BEEN SET UP FROM THE BEGINNING. The provision for the requirements of man's fallen nature was no afterthought but a fore-thought. His refuge-sanctuary-throne "was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was." There was no strain put upon the eternal constitution of the throne that it might become a refuge. The refuge was ever latent in the unbroken depths of the throne, and, for the revelation of its fundamental glory, needed to be opened up.

What a comfort to know that nowhere has man ever been without this refuge. God only knows who and how many have availed themselves of it. Sphondrati, a cardinal of the Church of Rome, on being asked if the refuge was open to the heathen, wisely replied in parable to the following effect: "There is one of the Canary islands on which it never rains, and

yet it is fertile. It was long a great mystery how it could be so fertile without rain. At length one observed that evening by evening a cloud gathered and rested upon it all night, which explained the method of bringing about what had always been felt to be a mysterious result, so to your question concerning the method of salvation for the heathen, I reply: *Nescia modum, id scio non deesse.*"

The history of man unfolds the eternal purpose, and will be no mean history when complete. It was the joy of the Eternal Wisdom, Whose "delights were with the sons of men" "ere ever the earth was;" it will be His joy when the earth is no more. The discords of human history lie between two harmonies, the one in which they have no place, the other in which they have been resolved. In man's nature is struck the key-note of those pre-established harmonies, the melody of which is being written out in his history as a fitting song with which to celebrate the close of his earthly career, and the reconciliation of all things. "God is with us." We will not be afraid. Our sins are neither too old, nor too deep, nor too numerous. The provision of mercy is older and deeper, and more abundant. The refuge set up

from the beginning proclaims, "Whosoever cometh I will in NO-WISE cast out."

7. WE MUST NOW CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THE PERSONALITY OF THIS REFUGE.—An impersonal refuge could never afford shelter and defence for man against his personal foes. It is from no material danger he flies, from no mere fever of the blood that he is in danger; but from evils which are of personal origin, from evils which are sins, sins against God, from which God alone can save us, and *He* only by delivering us from their inward dominion.

Moreover, the impersonal could never afford rest to, nor become a home for man. Man's shelter and defence, his rest and home must be congruous with his nature. What were all the world to man without a human shelter and defence, a human rest and home! What this earth of sea and land, this four-seasoned orb, encircled with its zodiac of burning lights, this tent of dropping clouds set midway 'twixt two firmaments! or what were the song of birds, the roar of ocean, or the babbling of the brooks! or what the beauty of the flowers, the majesty of forest trees; or the mountains crowned with unsullied snows; or the golden shafts of sunset! Man needs man, a human security, a human

joy, a human home, a warm maternal bosom on which to rest; not even God as God, but God as man. Without such an one man has no refuge, no rest, no home.

Is there such a person? One who is a refuge for man and a sanctuary for God? One who is also a throne, a throne exalted by a glorious history, and yet set up from the beginning? Oh joy of all joys, that God has revealed to us One possessed of all these attributes! Need we name Him? It is He of whom the Lord doth write by the pen of all His holy prophets, "In that day I will call my servant . . and I will clothe Him with thy robe, and strengthen Him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into His hand; and He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah; and the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall open and none shall shut; and He shall shut and none shall open: and I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place, and He shall be for a glorious throne for His Father's house: and they shall lay upon Him all the glory of His Father's house." Is He not our refuge? Do we not pray at His feet:

> "Rock of ages cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee."

And is He not a sanctuary, a Divine house, a home for God, as well as a refuge for man? And does it not please the whole fulness of God to dwell in Him? And is He not the throne of the universe, the centre of all power and glory? And is He not exalted above all the heavens, and above every name that can be named? And is not His exaltation "to the glory of God the Father?" And does it not date "from the beginning," "from before the foundation of the world?" "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

Has it occurred to you, my brethren, that these thoughts in the order in which they have been brought before us present to us the history of Christian experience?

We make our first acquaintance with Christ as a refuge. We seek in Him deliverance, shelter, and safety. Having made the experience of Him as a refuge, we begin to find He is more than a refuge, that he is a Divine house, a blessed home, a home in the house of God. Then, as we enlarge our acquaintance with our home, we find it a house of many mansions, opening up out of each other height above height, until a very throne is displayed to us—the

throne of God, rising out of the refuge for man—and that the refuge is lost in the throne. And then as we gaze upon the throne which has hidden the refuge in its glory, the humanity in the Divinity, we begin to discover the refuge again in its deeper depth, something human in the depths of the Divine, and that it gives its own lustre to the central glory of the throne. And we perceive that this eternal humanity in the depths of Deity which gives a lustre to the eternal glory is the humanity which is the Alpha and Omega of man's earthly history. And seeing this we refuse to it all dates and proclaim it to have been ever from of old, and that it "became" the Eternal Son in the bosom of the Father, nay, "behoved Him to be in all things made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" nay, more, that it "must needs have been" that He might "enter into His glory!" Hallelujah! God has made Himself one with us in our necessities that we may partake of His glory.

Need I say that in the very nature of things we must make Him our refuge or we shall soon find ourselves unsheltered outcasts? The great question

is not, Christ or some other refuge, but Christ or none! Oh, how long will any one of my hearers remain insensible of his need of Christ as a refuge? Do I hear one of you say, "I am more than sensible of my need of Him but I fear He is no longer a refuge open for me?" Be assured, dear brother, that not the air you breathe, nor the light of day, nor yonder ocean is freer for your use than Christ as your refuge.

This too, I must add, that, he who makes Christ his refuge shall one day sit with Him on the throne of His glory. He who receives the Kingdom of Heaven in the humblest form will receive power for the height of its glory. "Behold," says Christ in His last message to us from heaven, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne." "He that hath an ear let him hear."

SERMON IX.

DEATH AN APPOINTMENT.

(Preached on Sunday Evening, October 27, 1861.)

HEBREWS ix. 27.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this judgment."

THE writer of this epistle, in his argument as to the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, appears to have been reminded of His predicted coming again —not, however, again to die, but to enter on the results of His death. He is led, consequently, to make a comparison between man's appointment to die once and then to be judged and to enjoy or suffer the just consequences of his life; and Christ's being offered up once, and His coming again a second time to see of the travail of His soul and enjoy the blessed satisfaction wrought by His life, and triumphantly finished in His death.

Let us, however, drop the comparison and argument of the Apostle, and deal with the words of the text as the statement of a fact, that death and judgment are appointments for us all. We must all die; we shall all be judged.

1. IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN TO DIE. Man, then, is no exception to the universal doom, to the all-prevailing law of earthly life. We live in a dying world. The life we live is mortal. The very crust of the earth is composed of the dust of life. The graves of the dead outnumber, and are more densely peopled than the homes of the living. Whatever be the order elsewhere, here death reigns. He lays his destructive hand upon all—upon the flowers of our fields, our flocks, and our families. He is the great spoiler. The ruins he has wrought would raise a mountain which would reach the sky.

The season of the year which has again come round makes his reign sadly evident. Everywhere death is in the ascendency. Our fields, so recently full of life and beauty, are naked and bare; the trees are meekly resigning their living robes, the very day declines, and soon darkness and death will again assert their supremacy.

And *this* season,* while the sun of abounding national prosperity continues to shine upon us, not satisfied with his appointed supremacy in the orderly course of nature, as at present constituted, Death roams at large, in capricious disorder, scattering his malignant darts at pleasure, making our flocks and herds his untimely victims, and binding men in the dread bondage of fear lest "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, or the destruction that wasteth at noonday," should in turn make them also untimely victims ere their day of life begins to decline.

At any time, under any circumstances, death is appalling. He is well called "the King of terrors." The dread of death crowns all our fears. He comes to the work of destruction blind, heartless, and inexorable. No charms arrest him, no tears stay his hand, no agony of woe averts his stroke, no prayer reaches his ear. In his ruthless and terrible work, he is the dread of all.

We dare not make light of death. As the departure of life, the destruction of its body, and, judging from analogy merely, the extinction of existence, not to dread death would be not to value anything we

* This discourse was preached at the time of the cattle plague.

possess or enjoy, and to hold even ourselves of no abiding worth. But our intense horror of death, monopolizing and crowning every other fear, shows our appreciation of and the tenacity with which we cling to life. He Who had "life in Himself" most dreaded death. And we fear death in proportion to our sense of the value of life. Only creatures low in the scale of being, who have no proper sense of life, can be without the dread of death.

All the approaches to death make it dreadful. The crowded way of pale disease, of corrupting beauty, of enfeebled powers, of grief and distressing care, of disconsolate old age, of life which enjoys life no longer, makes us dread death. For, if the way be such, what must it be to pass through that crowded gate! But far more fearful than this gradual approach is the sudden rush of the king of terrors, in his capricious malice hurrying us direct from bright and busy life to his dark and noisome chambers—so that all life long we cease not to pray to be delivered "from sudden death."

Moreover, dying is an utterly new experience, to be undergone alone, and not to be repeated. We cannot practise dying, nor can any one accompany us. We

die but once and alone, and we return not again. We know not, and never can know, what death is till we die. Our ignorance increases our fears. We are bound to what we have been accustomed. We cling to what we are acquainted with. The unknown is full of vague terrors. "To exchange that which has been felt as certainty for that which seems uncertain, because untried, is painful to us. We fear disaster where we cannot see." The instinct that causes the stoutest heart to shrink from darkness, and to people it with phantoms, makes the dark, silent, solitary land a land of terrors, at which the flesh quivers and the soul faints from fear.

Death is "the last enemy," and the most terrible. We may, in some measure, learn how to meet other foes, but we have no experience to cast light on his devices, or to give us hope in this final conflict. The last enemy bears no relation to any preceding foe. Those who are brought down, and lie nearest the gate, are no wiser concerning the passage and the other shore, than those farthest off. Death answers no questions; allows no light to shine from within his gate; and forbids any who have passed through to return.

Yet, notwithstanding this "horror of great darkness," dying is not "the sting of death." Death was in the world before sin; and, had there been no sin, dying would have been merely a being "clothed upon," death only in name without "the sting;" in reality, a passage of life, from less to more—from lower to higher life. Sin is "the sting of death" since it makes us forbode a future according to our conscious desert.

> "To die, but not to die," contains the sting of death—
> "To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This dread of something after death
> Makes cowards of us all."

2. OUR TEXT, HOWEVER, MEETS THIS DREAD, RELIEVES THE DARKNESS AND FURNISHES GROUND FOR HOPE. It speaks of death as an "appointment," —a Divine appointment, also, of an "after-death." It, moreover, brings our death into relation with the death of Christ, and our "after-death" with "His coming again without sin unto salvation." Death, then, is not an end, still less is it simply a punishment.

As at first pronounced it was an end, an end which was the fruit and punishment of sin. "In the day thou sinnest, thou shalt die," was the great warning and sentence against sin, but in this there is no mention of an "after-death," simply the announcement of death as the sinner's "be-all" and "end-all." That there is an after-death, is, because death, as the end of sin, has been constituted the possible beginning of a life without sin. Death is no longer merely the retributive consequence of disobedience, but also a Divine appointment, as a conditioning process with respect to a life beyond. The primitive law stands, "The soul that sins shall die"—making death punitive and an absolute finality. And this punitive is also the natural law operative in our sinful nature. For "Lust when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." But we are not under nature but under Grace, and the necessity of sinful nature has been constituted a gracious appointment. As a law of righteousness it could not be abrogated, but it might be made subservient to other and even higher ends. What *might* be has been done. The curse has been made a blessing. Death, like every other enemy of God and

man, is appointed to serve both. As an enemy death has been destroyed, and that most triumphantly, in its being made the way to the most glorious life. The life that sits on the throne of God, and is the glory and crown of the universe is a life after death. And "*the* hope," which is the light of our life now, and its future "crown," is one that is "laid up for us in heaven," to receive which we must submit to the conditioning appointment of death. Thus, by this appointment, the law of our mortality is associated with the law of divinest life. We must now die to live. From the ashes of the dead arise the temples of the living, and the grave becomes the fruitful womb of a life which never dies. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory—Oh, Death! where is thy sting? Oh, Grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. NOW LET US SEE THAT DEATH IS AN APPOINTMENT WHICH IS RETROSPECTIVE. It looks back upon the life lived as a closed season of growth and improvement, a terminated opportunity and power of life—life richer, higher, and abiding. At first our nature is but a feeble, helpless existence, endowed with wonderful possibilities of being, placed in a world of opportunity and wonderful powers. Death looks back upon our earthly history as a closed season in which those possibilities might have become realities. Death closes the opportunity. Whilst the opportunity lasted it was ours to make good in our experience all its intentions and purposes. Once closed we are withdrawn from the powers which make possible any *radical* change. Beyond death the principles and issues of our life are fixed and unalterable.

Let the analogies of nature illustrate our meaning. Look at that seed. In its present bare, dry, unquickened state, there is only the possibility of a life after its kind, a life of given properties as to form, colour, and power of increase. In its present state it is unaffected by the elements which surround it. But let it be sown in the earth, and its season will begin, a season of opportunity and power for all the latent

possibilities of its life to become realities. The external elements to the quickened seed are full of active powers and means of life. The earth, the air, the sunshine, the dew from below, the rain from above, all combine and co-operate in calling forth its quickened possibilities. With its roots it draws up nourishment from the earth, and with its leaves breathes into itself life from heaven. Marvellous combinations take place in the formation of those exquisite forms of surpassing beauty which serve as vessels and vehicles for the preparation and transmission of its nourishment as a fruit-bearing plant. Soon, however, its brief season completes itself, and begins to pass away, and with the decline of the season signs of decay begin to show themselves. The blossom falls, the foliage fades, the fruit matures, and the seed gathers around it the hard husk through which no further change takes place. What it is, it remains, a fixed result of the opportunity, the season, and influences through which it has passed. The elements brought into co-operative combination for the production of this result are again resolved. The vessels of the plant which have received and used these outward influences for the maturity of the seed

are dried and broken up. The seed which has been produced alone remains. Such, too, is the course of human life. At first it is but a weak and helpless form endowed with wonderful possibilities of Being, born in the midst of a sphere of equally wonderful powers, marvellously varied, combined, and arranged with infinite wisdom, in view of the life to be nourished, the Being to be built up. This feeble, helpless form of infant life is acted upon by these agencies, and soon becomes full of active powers to receive and appropriate what they impart. The unconscious babe becomes a conscious infant, the infant in the mother's arms becomes a little child, a girl at school, a maiden among youths, a wife among matrons, a mother in the midst of her children. Through all this way of life, through all these passing relations, constant and innumerable influences have been exerting their quickening, nourishing, converting, and maturing powers upon the growing contents of a Being which so recently was but a helpless form of infant possibilities. Now, youth has long since passed away, maturity has seen its day, age creeps on with growing infirmities. The body again becomes feeble and helpless in its decline, and no longer receives and

transmits with its former sensitive appreciation and delicate fidelity the influences of the outward world. The eye grows dim, the ear becomes dull, the passions lose their force, and the appetite and taste their keenness. But the habits of life have grown strong and become imperious, and confine the soul to its own order of thought and feeling and bent of will. The soul is thus shut up within its own world. The decline of the body and the decay of the senses bring about a degree of insensibility to external influences, and allow the gathered contents of the inner life to mature; whilst the exclusive order of thought and feeling and will, imposed by the dominion of habit, fixes, gives solidity to, and intensifies the principles and qualities of the soul's character. And now—"or ever the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, the trembling of the keepers of the house, the bowing down of the strong ones, the darkening of those that look out at the windows, the low music, the high fears, the flourish of the almond tree, the increasing burdens, the decreasing desires"—all tell the tale that man goeth to his long home, when "the dust will return to the earth *as it was*, and the spirit to God who gave it—*but not as it was*." The spirit in

the full contents of its life looks back upon all opportunity and power, in relation to the possibilities of its being, as closed, and begins to learn from within what have been their use or abuse, and to anticipate their future consequences.

4. FOR DEATH IS AN APPOINTMENT WHICH IS RETROSPECTIVE BECAUSE IT IS ALSO PROSPECTIVE. It looks back, and from the past determines the future. There is an after-death to which our moral nature points, of which it makes demands. Things do not appear on this side the grave in their true relations. Strange combinations present themselves, which are often held together simply by the force of circumstances and the necessities of our temporal forms of life, against which we often carry a deep inward protest. The temporary form does not always express the true substance; circumstances are often in no real relation to character; the inherited blood may flow in opposition to the currents of the new-born life; spiritual willingness is often restrained by the weakness of the flesh. But death resolves all these false combinations and unrighteous alliances, and separates from us all that is foreign to our real life, and restores to us all that is truly ours. Death gives back to the

earth all that belongs to the earth, and to heaven all that belongs to heaven; strips off all disguises, reveals all concealments, and unveils the truth. At death the true character, the real principles, the animating motives, the ruling passion, the controlling will, all become manifest.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death judgment," a righteous separation, will place all things in their true self-consistent relations and assign to every one his own place in accordance with reality, truth, and justice. The great function of a judge is to unravel the complicated web of evidence presented to him, to separate the false from the true, the irrelevant from the pertinent, that the individual may stand judged in the light of his true principles and character. In this sense, death precedes and prepares for judgment, that the righteous may shine forth in their own unclouded light, and the wicked be clothed in the unrelieved darkness of their own shame.

Let us learn, then, that our life on earth is formative, combines, for its own purpose, things dissimilar, enters into relations false and true according to its will, has the power to assume the appearance without possessing the reality, to hide what is true and exhibit

what is false. The outward history of all this passes away, but nothing is lost, or forgotten, or unproductive. The inner life treasures up the results of the outward history. The spirit makes faithful record in its own nature of all that takes place, and is the living witness of whatever has happened. Just as the deposits which compose the crust of the earth, the water-marks on the rock that was once yielding sand, the foot-prints of creatures which no longer exist, reveal to us a world that has passed away, and also a world brought into existence, so in our souls will be found the history and results of the life we have lived. The most fleeting and trivial things, the very shadows of our passing days leave their records behind them. In our hidden life time and eternity meet, the finite awakens and characterises the infinite, and every experience has its influence in the formation of the character of our souls.

But if the life given us is formative, and has the power to unite and combine according to its pleasure, let us not forget that it is under an appointment to die, and that death divides and separates ; separates all means from their appointed ends, all mere appearances from realities, all scaffoldings from the building,

all things mortal from the immortal, all things temporal from the eternal.

And what death divides and separates, judgment exhibits and declares. The judgment will bring the hidden to light, reveal every secret and declare all things according to truth, and assign to all their own place and company, in accordance with their real character, and as the result of the life lived. "For we must all *appear* before the judgment-seat of Christ, [literally, be turned inside-out ;] that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." The judgment will be as truly human as it will be Divine, will commend itself to man as well as approve itself to God. "For the Father hath given to the Son authority to execute all judgment, *because* He is the Son of Man." It is "The Son of Man" Who will separate one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and will say to the one, "Come ye blessed," and to the other, "Depart ye cursed." And this sentence will be for doom. "Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

SERMON X.

THE ABSOLUTE CHARACTER AND CRITICAL EFFECTS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

(*Preached on Sunday Evening, Jany. 13, 1856.*)

2 CORINTHIANS, ii. 14-16.

"Now, thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

THE text in its immediate connection presents a striking instance of a peculiarity in St. Paul's style of writing. He often drops the subject in hand and goes off, at the suggestion of a word, into a digression which has little apparent relation thereto. If you look at the 13th verse of this chapter you will see that he says, he left Troas in deep distress, at

not having met Titus there, and came into Macedonia. But, notwithstanding his sorrow, at the mention of Macedonia, he startles us by an outbreak of thanksgiving, "Now, thanks be unto God, &c." He does not explain this outburst of thankfulness, and tell us why he thus breaks forth. But we happen to know why. In Macedonia he received Titus, whom he expected at Troas, with news from Corinth, which he had anticipated with dread, but which, as it turned out, instead of confirming his fears, filled him with joy. He feared the Corinthians might have resented the faithfulness of his dealing with them in his former letter, and been hardened by it, instead of made penitent, but Titus brings him the news of their repentance and reformation, and he is overwhelmed with joy. He finds he has achieved a triumph, when he half-dreaded a defeat, and he cannot help expatiating upon it at the mention of the name of the place where Titus met him. And in doing so he generalises the thought to the expression of this truth—that the exercise of sincerity and faithfulness on the part of a Christian Minister, in "speaking the truth in love," is always a triumph in the sight of God, whatever may be its effect upon the persons addressed. He

therefore enlarges the sphere of his joy, and thanks God, "which *always* causes us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us *in every place*."

This same peculiarity, resulting from rapidity of thought and earnestness of mind, may be further seen in the illustrative manner in which he presents to his readers this triumphant success of his ministry. The word triumph calls up before his mind those martial processions with which the ancient Romans celebrated their great victories, and rewarded the army after a successful campaign, when it made a public entrance into the city, and received the nation's homage and thanks. These triumphs were gorgeous displays, arranged and set out, as by martial instinct, to give effective expression, and do honor, to the military valour of the people. If, for a moment, we recall them, we shall not only be brought into livelier sympathy with the apostle's expressions, but furnished with an illustration which will give power and clearness to our discourse,—on the *real* character of the Gospel notwithstanding its opposite effects on those who hear it.

When, in compliance with the request which the suc-

cessful general presented at the head of his army before the gates of the city, the Senate had granted a public celebration of the victory achieved, the procession was arranged on the field of Mars, and proceeded to the city through the Porta Triumphalis, and after passing along the Via Sacra, ascended the Capitol to offer sacrifice in the temple of Jupiter. The cortege was led by music and song, followed by incense-bearers, making the whole atmosphere fragrant. Then came the oxen for sacrifice in the temple, and the more distinguished captives, led in chains, to be put to death on the way. The magistrates and senate followed, preceding the chariot which bore the general at the head of his troops, amid the shouts and songs and wild applause of the whole people. On the way to the Capitol the miserable captives were led off and put to death, and on reaching it the oxen were offered in sacrifice, and the army divided the spoil. Altogether it was a gorgeous though barbarous pageant, which seems to have impressed Paul's mind, as he more than once alludes to it. In the text he thanks God who led him on from place to place in the train of His triumph celebrating victory over the enemies of Christ, and sending forth, by him, a

stream of fragrant incense throughout the world. For Christ is the ever-fragrant incense, though to those who reject Him, like the sweet odours in the triumphal procession to the poor victims about to be slain, "a sweet savour of death unto death," while to those who receive Him "a sweet savour of life unto life," like the perfumed atmosphere which led the victorious army through a triumphant way, from life to life, to its coronation on the Capitol. In like manner "we are unto God," says Paul, "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life."

We have, therefore, these two thoughts given us for our consideration:—The real character of the Gospel as seen in what it is to God; and its critical influence as seen in its opposite effects on those to whom it is ministered.

1. THE ABSOLUTE OR REAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. What anything *is*—is at once determined by our knowing what it is to God. He is the only true Judge, and His judgments are just. All things *are* what they are to Him. There is an agreement

between Him and the true nature of every creature. Whereas to us, who have fallen from our nature, and departed from the truth, the appearance and effects of things vary with our varying states. Things are to us what we are to them. Even opposite effects follow the same cause. Heat hardens clay, but softens wax; light is most pleasant to the healthful eye, but nothing is more pernicious when it is diseased; food in certain conditions of the body will be as prejudicial as poison, and poison as beneficial as food. And there are who "call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter;" but a woe is pronounced upon them.—And, similarly, God is to us what we are to Him: "to the merciful He shews Himself merciful; to the upright He shews Himself upright; and to the froward He will shew Himself froward." He *is* Love, but there are to whom He is a "consuming fire." "If we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us, and punish us seven times for our sins."

It is this principle of the retributive action of the relation of God to men, in accordance with their character, that is here applied to the Gospel. In

itself, as the word signifies, it is God's spell, a message from God possessed of a charm. He that hath ears to hear it will be *won* by it; but "the wicked, who are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, will not hearken to the voice of the charmer—charming never so wisely." In the Gospel, God appears in all the attractive attributes of His Grace, that He may regain the alienated affections of His rebellious children. If they are not drawn to Him by this exhibition of Himself, they are confirmed and hardened in their estrangement. The Gospel pre-supposes, therefore, not only the relation between God and man as that between a father and child—a relation on the part of the child of dependence and relative freedom; on the part of the father of protection, wise government, and loving care—but also, the violation of this relation by disobedience, and presents to us the method of God's dealing with His disobedient children, whose disobedience has transgressed the law of their own nature, and perverted all their relations. It is in view of this state of man's nature that we have to consider the character of the Gospel.

It was not only declared by, but embodied in Jesus, Who was "sent out," and "set forth" to reveal the

Father in His relations to a sinful world. In Him we have the will, and mind, and heart of God towards man. He is "God manifest in flesh." Everything that *is* proclaims Him Who made it. But "the *things* which are made" do but partially reveal their Maker. And man, "made in His image and after His likeness," who should be a self-revelation and have a self-knowledge of God, has so fallen from himself and come under the bondage of sin that, "professing himself to be wise, he became a fool, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and thus changing the truth of God into a lie, worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator," and lived "without God and without hope in the world." Apart from Christ, man has no true knowledge of God, and is "without hope." The God of hope is a God revealed.

In Christ, God is personally manifested and personally present. Christ not only declares His message, but reveals His person. This is the distinctive character of Christian revelation, that God is personally brought out to view. His message in the Gospel is embodied in His messenger. Jesus is the Divine charm, and "the charmer." He not only proclaims,

but He is the Gospel. "His name is as perfume poured forth"—the diffusion of "the sweet savour of the knowledge of God."

He is this because He is the manifestation not merely of His person, but of that which is the very soul of personality—namely, its Love. In the wide circumference of things God has gone forth in the division of His powers, but in Christ His deep central unity appears—His Love. Every attribute of God proceeds from and resolves itself into His Love. Love is the one name that covers all and expresses all. Love is the only attribute that unifies personality, and in which it bestows itself in all its integrity. He who possesses the love of another, possesses that other. Of nothing else can this be said. You may have the thought of another, the opinions, the best judgment, the labour—and yet not have him; but you cannot receive his love without possessing him and all that he has. "God is Love," and the Gospel is its complete display. "He that seeth Me," says Christ, "seeth the Father." "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God,

but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

But further—if we would open up the deep, rich interior of God's personal display in the Gospel—we must add that it not only personally reveals God, and opens up the depth of personality in its love, but that it also reveals the depth of love in its wisdom. There is nothing so wise as love. Apart from the affections, the genius of intelligence is not called forth, nor its wonderful resources manifested. God is "the only wise God" because He is Love. The wisdom of love is equal to whatever it is desirable and possible to do. The restoration of fallen and alienated man is the problem in the solution of which the love of God displays the marvellous resources of its wisdom. In the Gospel the practical intelligence

of the Divine love makes such a display of the Divine character that it appeals to all the influential motives operative on man's nature, so that if He is not won by it, he is left "without excuse," and God is left to lament, "What more could have been done to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

The Gospel not only displays and embodies but taxes to the utmost the resources of the Divine Love and Wisdom combined. Love takes counsel of wisdom how to make the most effective appeal to the sinner's heart, and wisdom calls upon love for that winning display of the Divine goodness which looks upon the sinner with mercy whilst it exercises vengeance on his sin. It was with tears Christ pronounced the doom of Jerusalem. Mercy is that look of Wisdom and Love which pities where righteousness blames. To the innocent love wears a face of goodness, to the sinful a face of mercy. Mercy pities and helps whilst it condemns and punishes. It is the look of suffering

helpfulness which reveals the depths of God's power to be a saving might. When He exercises terrible judgments upon men and nations, we are taught that he does so "because His mercy endureth for ever." "He has concluded all under sin" "that He might have mercy upon all." The tears which the father wept upon the neck of his returning prodigal reveal the awful nature of sin more than the son's destitute and degraded condition among the swine, whilst they open up the father's heart more than all the uniform and undisturbed flow of his goodness towards his elder brother. Did no clouds overshadow the earth and no moisture burden the atmosphere, we should not know the hidden beauties of light; and if no sin had darkened our moral sky, and no guilt burdened the breath of our life, we should never have seen the Divine love in tears. It may well be asked, Whether the universe of Being can afford to lose this spectacle! And whether the kingdom which cannot be moved could be built upon any other foundation than the floods of the Divine Mercy! "He hath established it upon the floods."

But the Gospel is not merely the manifestation of the personality of God; and of the depth of personality

in His Love; and of the depth of Love in His Wisdom; and of the depths of Love and Wisdom opened up in their unity in Mercy—but it is the display of Mercy in its deepest agony of effort! It is the Divine tragedy in which "the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep;" in which sin is judged, condemned, and slain, and the sinner justified, liberated, and restored. Jesus, "the Son of man," in tears, in prayerful importunity, in agony and bloody sweat, God-forsaken and yet God-confiding, is a spectacle which reveals the Father to be "a just God and a Saviour," in Whom "mercy rejoiceth against judgment," and Who from within the consuming depths of His Justice sends forth the meekness of His All-conquering Mercy as the glow and glory—the glorious Gospel—of the blessed God.

No wonder Paul felt the proclamation of its glad tidings to be the celebration of a triumph, a triumph of God, a triumph in God, a triumph "in the highest," before it celebrated a triumph on earth among men. The angels' sang, "Glory to God in the highest," as the preface to their song of "peace on earth, good will toward men." The Gospel celebrates the triumphant achievement of bringing out to view that

which "from the beginning was hid in God;" of making the last first, the innermost the outermost; of making known "the mystery," from "the depths" of God, and constituting it the foundation of that which is to be built up for ever; of planting the Cross in our Immanuel-ground as "the tree of life for the healing of the nations;" of the triumph of the passive attributes of meekness, gentleness, humility, and patience over what before had appeared to be the conquering attributes of eternal power, might, and dominion,—by placing mercy far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that can be named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, that the kingdom of patience might for ever stand as the Home-kingdom of God.

And no wonder that Paul also felt that he and his companions, as preachers of this Gospel, "were unto God a sweet savour of Christ." What can be so pleasant to love as that of being made known? What furnishes to earthly parents so deep and sacred a joy as that their children know the depths of their heart towards them—their undying devotion, their self-forgetfulness, their long-suffering patience, their joy in self-sacrifice? What so fragrant to God as the

diffusion of the sweet mystery of the Cross, "to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord?" And just as the scattered flowers, fragrant shrubs, and sweet incense, breathed forth a perfume of sweet savour before the advancing ranks in the triumphal procession, irrespective of its effects on victor and vanquished; so, irrespective of its consequences with respect to those who hear the Gospel, the ministry of its glad tidings is unto God the diffusion of a sweet savour.

2. LET US NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO ITS CRITICAL INFLUENCE AS SEEN IN ITS OPPOSITE EFFECTS ON THOSE TO WHOM IT IS PREACHED. "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God" embodies the wisdom and power of the Divine love in their endeavour to meet the requirements of man's sin and sinfulness, and is in itself perfectly adapted as the chosen body of truth to mediate the influence of the Holy Spirit, to awaken the mind, arouse the conscience, subdue the heart, and reform the whole nature. In it God appeals to us by motives which He

knows to be influential, which exercise a constraining power on the thoughts, affections, and will, and in which "He is mighty to save."

Their effect, therefore, on those who listen to it must be great. We cannot come under the ministry of the Gospel, and remain the same as we were before we heard it. It necessarily exercises a critical influence on those to whom it is preached. It either subdues or hardens, alienates or reconciles, kills or cures. It is a ministry either of life or of death. Its nature is such that neutrality with respect to it is impossible. What it may be to us is dependent on the disposition we exercise towards it. We bring to it what determines its effects. The Gospel changes not. Like its Author it is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, and is always, in itself considered, "the power of God unto salvation;" but its effects on us varies with our varying dispositions. "It is even as the sun himself (so often made the emblem of God) is, ever one and the same; but the effects he produces vary with our varying position; being at one time morning, at another noon, at another eve." God is to us what we are to Him. "With the merciful He shows Himself merciful, with an upright man He will

show Himself upright, with the pure He shows Himself pure, but with the froward He shows Himself froward." "The Lord is with us while we are with Him: and if we seek Him,, He will be found of us. But if we forsake Him He will forsake us." Yet He changeth not. But as a mirror which changes not represents the changes of the beholder, so the mirror of God's word reflects our dispositions. To those who seek peace, God is a "God of peace;" but to those who strive with Him, "He is a man of war." "When the prodigal was yet afar off, but a-coming and returning to his father, his father *ran* to meet him; and yet God is like "Mount Zion, which cannot be moved." It is this critical influence of the Gospel the Apostle speaks of in the text.

"To the one we are the savour of life unto life." The ministry of the grace of God in Christ is the breathing forth of a spiritual essence fragrant with life. It has the power of life, of the sweetness of life, of the joy of life, of the beauty of life. As ministers of "the Word of the Truth of the Gospel," "as truth is in Jesus," we are sowers of living seed which grows from life to life; from life quickened to life raised up; from life liberating itself from the bondage of death,

cleansing itself and putting on its beautiful garments —as summer life frees itself from its winter imprisonment—to life free, fully clothed, putting forth its blossoms and breathing out fragrance; from life weighted and restricted by its "foundations in the dust" to life which has put off all weight, free to rise in its own living vessel, and that vessel eternal in the heavens—from life to life, life natural to life spiritual. "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual." "First the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear. And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come."

"To the one we are the savour of life unto life; but to the other the savour of death unto death." Paul felt acutely that he could not be the minister of the word of life to men without increasing their responsibility and aggravating the condemnation of those who rejected it, who, comparatively, might have had no sin if this light of life had not shone upon them, but who "now would have no cloak for their sin." For, in proportion to its quickening power of life in those who receive it, does it work death in those who

refuse to accept it. Just as the balmy, life-giving breezes of spring bring life to the constitutionally sound, but death to those radically diseased, so is it with the Gospel. To some it is life to hear it, to others death; to the one the sweet breath of life, to the other the odour of death—"of death unto death," the death of indifference to the death of obduracy; the death of ignorance and darkness of mind to that of light and knowledge having become darkness; the death of hopelessness to that of despair. As there are degrees in life, so are there degrees in death. And, as Life in the New Testament does not mean mere existence, death does not mean non-existence. Within the spheres of both life and death there is room for a vast history. There are immeasureable heights into which life may ascend, and there are unfathomable depths into which death may descend." "Death unto death;" from the death of hope to the life of despair, which is a deeper death. The nature of fallen man being susceptible of the application of the Divinest means for his recovery, he is, in case of their employment and failure, thereby doomed to a corresponding depth of wretchedness and woe. The

height of privilege bestowed upon him in the offer of the Gospel is antithetic to the depth of ignominy which its rejection involves. "Death unto death" has, therefore, a meaning which only that nature can experience which is capable of receiving the gift of life unto life. And for this doom of ever-deepening death, to be brought about by the rejection of the gracious offer of eternal life, is a woful aggravation of its state of wretchedness which language is impotent to describe, because it lies so far beyond the realm of our present experience. It is called the state of "the second death," of "outer darkness," of "destruction," and in our text, "of death unto death." For our youth and beauty to droop and die by the very breezes that are laden with fresh life tells us how radical and malignant the disease was; and for the Gospel of Jesus to exercise a ministry of death shows how fatally depraved man may become. For the sun to shine upon the grave which robs us of the treasures of our heart adds darkness to its gloom; and the light of the love of Jesus falling upon a conscience hopelessly "seared as with a hot iron" adds fuel to its fire, and turns a human bosom into a hell.

Let us learn that the character of the purpose of God's grace and the means for its fulfilment are such as to give Him joy wherever they are proclaimed, and to "make manifest the sweet savour of Christ" whenever they are dispensed. In themselves they are not only good, but the best which the Father's heart contains for His children.

What they are to us is determined by our own moral state and character. If our hearts are as "the way-side," we shall not understand the seed of the Divine word when it is sown ; if they are stony, with only a thin covering of soil, though we receive it, having no depth in ourselves, we shall give it no abiding place, and should it quickly spring up it will as quickly wither away ; if our hearts are pre-occupied and we receive it as among thorns, though it grow and "endure for a while," it will be choked and become unfruitful ;" but if we present to it the deep, clean, and mellow soil of "an honest and good heart," it will bring forth much fruit, to the soul's everlasting profit and the good pleasure of God. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."

Oh my beloved hearers! make this the opportunity of

God's grace to your soul, and the hour of its power. Let me not celebrate a triumph which to you shall be a defeat. The diffusion of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it shines from the face of Jesus Christ is unto God a sweet savour: let it be to you, I beseech you, the sweet power of His love kindling in you the light of Life unto Life.

SERMON XI.

THE OPEN AND SHUT DOOR.

(Preached on Sunday Evening, January 10, 1864.)

REVELATIONS iii. 8. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door."
JOHN x. 9. "I am the door."
MATTHEW xxv. 10. "The door was shut."

A LITTLE bundle of texts furnishing, in parable, this subject for our consideration—the greatness of man's opportunity, together with the greatness of his peril in opportunity neglected. We begin life with an open door before us; by neglecting to enter in we may end it with the door shut against us.

Doors are for shutting and opening. They are open to some; shut against others—at one time set open, at another securely closed. While to one person ready entrance is afforded, to another there is no admission. They are humble, narrow ways of

entrance to what is separated, enclosed, and placed under restriction. They are strait and narrow that they may be of easy control and defence.

Doors are of many kinds. There are the doors of a tent, the doors of a house, the door of a chamber, "the doors of the sea," and the door of the land, as the valley of Achor is called; the doors of the senses, the doors of the soul, "the doors of the womb," and the door of the grave; "the gates of Hades," and "the gates of Heaven." Gates and doors, therefore, material and immaterial, visible and invisible, personal and impersonal.

Everything has its door leading into its own reserves, by which easy entrance to them is furnished; but, apart from which, they are inaccessible. Some ways of entrance are very narrow and restricted, others are relatively wide and open. To some things wider access is given than to other things. What an open door, for instance, the air finds! But, light has admission where air is excluded; and water has an open way where light finds no access; and heat finds ready entrance where neither water, light, nor air finds admission. Then, too, what a way there is for what we term influence, whether of a person or thing;

and also for "the pestilence that walks in darkness," and "destruction that wasteth at noon-day!" In short, everything has its own open door.

We have each our door by which we are accessible; and, also, doors through which we have access to others. Friends find admission—enemies are excluded. Congenial spirits enjoy great freedom of mutual intercourse — diverse souls are kept apart. Human reason finds a wide door; but human sympathy and love a wider and deeper.

But, who knoweth the way of the spirit?—especially of His Spirit to whom "all things are naked and open"—Whose "wisdom is the worker of all things and teaches us—for in her is an understanding Spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtle, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good, kind to man, stedfast, sure, free from care, having all power, over-seeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure, and most subtle spirits. For wisdom is more moving than any motion; she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of

the Almighty; therefore, can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting life, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. And being but one, she can do all things; and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new—and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom." What a door, then, Wisdom has who is the maker and mother of us all!

1. But, though her children, WE MAKE OUR BEGINNING OUTSIDE THE DOOR OF ALL THINGS. We are born without the gate, laid very humbly at the door. Man's existence is a projection to the gate of Being. Our nature determines our place. To make a real beginning, to learn and choose our own way, requires the most distant removal from central powers. If we are to be self-determined and self-possessed, we must make our beginning without the gate.

But, although making our beginning at the outermost circumference of things, we are related to the central powers of life and Being, to which we have an open door and free access. We can only enter into that for which we are qualified by inborn aptitudes.

The royalty of our nature is, therefore, evidenced by the universality of our relationship. We make our beginning in unconscious weakness, but our conscious strength is secured, for our weakness is His who maketh His strength perfect in weakness. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though He be Lord of all." But, because he is a child, he has an ear for the Father's voice, and a voice that awakens the Father's heart. The possession of mere existence is not much for any creature, but existence endowed with the powers of intelligence and freedom, laid at the gate of universal Being to which it is related, is full of charms. Creaturehood, with unmeasured powers in relation to an untried universe, possessed of an inner world of possibilities to be called into realities by an outer world of forces and powers, with no experience, but everything promised—these are the charms that invest our nature at the gate, and make a human soul of more worth than worlds; and life at the door a priceless opportunity.

"Behold," says the Father, "I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut." This is the birthright of our childhood. The doors that are open

to any creature are pre-supposed and prepared for in its nature. The eagle's open way through the air to the unclouded light is very different from that of a serpent that hath its way in the dust. An open door, therefore, to an unrestricted inheritance pre-supposes corresponding powers of entrance. Only the Father's descended spirit can find access to God. Oh, my young brethren, to be told by the heavenly Wisdom, "I have set before thee an open door," to become conscious of our wonderful and fearful make, and of the more wonderful and fearful Presence that besets us, to know that our feebleness connects us with all might, our emptiness with all fulness, our ignorance with all wisdom, our creaturehood with the Creator of all worlds, our childhood with the Father of all spirits, constitutes our poverty the sublimest wealth, and gives a greatness to our littleness in comparison with which all other greatness is small indeed.

God with His universe stands at the gate of His child in the joy of expectation, waiting for the awaking of his intelligence to declare to him his blessedness of Being and the greatness of his inheritance. "Blessed is he that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door."

More interesting to contemplate than the upturned face of earth at the gate of day, or of budding spring at the gate of summer, is childhood at the gate of Being. To watch the dawn of observation, the ascent of the reason, the beaming forth of the affections, the enthronement of the will, the clothing of the body with intelligence, intelligence blooming into virtue, and virtue clothing itself with reverence and bowing down in worshipful expectation —gives a joy sharp enough but too deep for tears.

But, to descend to particulars, we may ask—to what is there not, at the first, an open door set before us? For a good measure of physical vigour, of bodily health and strength, there is free intercourse between our physical wants and all natural influences which are commissioned to exercise towards us a fostering care. The elements are charged with our well-being. Only by ignorance, folly, and abuse the door of our physical inheritance is closed against us. God's creatures are commissioned to befriend His children.

To more than a sufficiency of worldly goods there is at first an open door. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich, but he that dealeth with a slack hand becometh poor."

No less is there a fellowship of mind which seeks to awaken our observation and inquiry and minister to our knowledge. Man's history has created an atmosphere of thought and feeling which becomes intense as the ages run their course. Every age and every land has its spirit which is the outbirth of the ages preceding. And now that the most distant nations are brought into constant communication with each other, there is a circulation of human thought throughout the world. The air is full of it. It gives tone and colour and quickening energy to everything. To-day, therefore, God gives a meaning to His words they never had before—"I have set before thee an open door." The centres of human thought communicate hourly with the ends of the earth, and most distant souls are being fast brought under an influence of mind which formerly was only the privilege of a few who visited the centres of civilization and the seats of learning.

And the door of communication with the fountain-sources of all light and power of mind is ever widening. Earth draws nearer to and more partakes of heaven, and heaven has more of earth as generation after generation is "taken up." The door therefore

widens that invites to that moral culture which gives sanctity to thought and makes feeling holy, by teaching us to observe the proportions, bounds, and quality of all thought and feeling. It is this culture that brings harmony to our minds, gives peace to our hearts, and just-proportioned form to our whole life.

But to what a social inheritance is there not an open door? We are born into families. The family is the natural unit of society. Society is only possible through the family. In the family we receive our deepest, richest, and most sacred culture, enter into our truest enjoyment, and exercise our enduring influence. If as youths we go forth from our first homes, it is only that we may be prepared as men to enter upon our own homes.

But other worlds than earth, and higher life than is possible under nature is open to us, through the door that is set before us. The earth is neither prison-house, palace, nor true home for man. It is not an end, only a way, a marvellous thoroughfare to the Spiritual, the Infinite, and the Eternal. God has not opened up to us the kingdom of nature for our culture by means of our senses, and the kingdom of mind for

the culture of thought, affection, and will, by the exercise of our souls, and kept His own door closed against us as His children. He has not doomed us to perish in the earth, much less appointed us to wrath, but to "inherit all things" and "live together with Him." The natural and rational worlds are full of His Spirit to the natural and rational degrees, and by means of them He seeks to lead us up into our truest nature, that, as His children, our fellowship of life may be with Him. At present, and for a time, we are at school without the gate, but He forgets us not, nor permits the gate to be closed upon us. That we may not forget Him, He comes there, waiting for those who desire to meet with Him, and will be found of all who seek Him "with a heart that has a single aim and that speaks His language." He who made us and all things, made "all things for our sakes," and us for Himself. He hath "put all things under our feet," and given us the "dominion."

"Each thing is full of duty:
Waters united are our navigation;
Distinguished, our habitation;
Below, our drink; above our meat:
Both are our cleanliness. Hath one such beauty?
Then how are all things neat!

"More servants wait on Man,
Than he'll take notice of: in every path
He treads down that which doth befriend him,
When sickness makes him pale and wan.
Oh mighty love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him.

"Since then, my God, Thou hast
So brave a palace built; Oh dwell in it,
That it may dwell with Thee at last!
Till then, afford us so much wit,
That, as the world serves us, we may serve Thee
And both Thy servants be."

2. HE WHO MADE US AND LAID US AT THE OPEN DOOR HAS ANTICIPATED OUR PRAYER, AND MADE HIMSELF THE WAY OF ACCESS AND THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE. "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture."

How are we to understand this declaration—"I am the door?" what door? the door to what? Is Christ's language special or general, individual or comprehensive? Determined by His nature we can be in no doubt as to the meaning of His words. He who is "the light of the world," "the light of life," "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," "of whom, by whom, and to whom are all

things," cannot speak of Himself as "the door" in any restricted sense. He must be "the door" in the sense of being the supreme, absolute and all-embracing way of access. He is "the way, the truth and the life" of all things. All ways of entrance are typical of Him. From Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" all things have their appointed doors and ways; they all lead to Him, meet in Him. To Him, therefore, all things are naked and open. He can lead us into the truth of everything, for He is its truth, and into the truth itself, for He is the truth.

We are too accustomed to think of Christ merely as the door of mercy for our souls, but not of health for our bodies; as the door to heaven when we are dismissed from earth, but not the door to all earthly treasures; as the door of access to God, but not the door of access to men. We forget that His kingdom is an universal kingdom, and His dominion everlasting; that He exercises no divided sovereignty; that as He made all things and gave them the laws of their several existence,—the relations that hold them together in union and the government which gives

a purposed unity of operation to all their reciprocal and combined forces,—He must have His open way of access to them all. He knows, continues to sustain, and abides in sympathy with whatever He has made. He ceases not to be present with and to care for the works of His hands. All things must therefore be open to Him, as a machine, however intricate, is open to the machinist.

He is also the light of all our seeing. "If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light." And if we follow the light, we shall be led into all the ways of that hidden wisdom by which all things have been constituted and are kept in being. Fellowship with Him conditions deep and perfect acquaintance with anything that is His. The great Master of philosophy, unaided by the light of Revelation, was nevertheless able to teach that to understand the phenomena of time, we must learn to view them in the light of their spiritual causes and under "the form of eternity." And the disciple who drank most deeply into the spirit of his Divine Master says, "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk

in the light as He is in the light, we shall" live no isolated life, "but have fellowship one with another." And Christ Himself said, "*All things* that the Father hath are Mine, therefore said I, He shall take of Mine and show it unto you."

If, then, all illumination is but the diffusion of His light; all vitality but streams from Him as the life-fountain; all the uniting bands which make creaturely existence, being and society possible, but the witnesses and fruit of the universal fellowship of His love which ceases not to bestow itself—then if we have His spirit as the law of the spirit of our life, shall we not by Him find an open door to things natural as well as spiritual, if we seek to enter in! Shall we not be able to give experimental interpretation to His call to inherit all things!

Oh when will it be seen that "clearness of vision to distinguish shadows from substance, simplicity of heart to embrace the true and hate the false, strength of will to bear up against infinite complications of passions within, and influences without," are the conditions of all knowledge, earthly as well as heavenly, human as well as Divine, and "depend far more than we can conceive upon our being early imbued with the

feeling of a unity of things, and upon our being taught to refer them all to one centre!"—Then He who is acknowledged, as the Logos, to be the door of Creation's descent, will also be acknowledged to be the basal door from which all doors open, "the chief of the ways of God," within which every way is given to His creatures and the possession of His spirit will become the three-fold guiding thread of light, life and love, which will give ready and easy entrance to and exit from the otherwise inacessible, inextricable labyrinth of nature and man. With Him, as the light of all our seeing, it will become clear that all science, as the result of that instinct for unity that leads her to search for oneness under all variety; that all philosophy, as the undying craving of that "home-sickness" that "would be everywhere at home;" that all art as the endeavour to give outward and human expression to the motions of that spirit of harmony and beauty which gladden and adorn the world; and all society, as the ceaseless craving of individuals for the embodiment and enjoyment of the brotherhood of mankind,—do but witness to the deep, quenchless desires He has laid in our foundations to enter into our rightful domain

of all light and wisdom, beauty and harmony, life and love.

Having His spirit we stand in kindred relation to all things and all Being—our minds possess a fellowship of nature with all thought in its impersonal diffusion and in its personal centres; our hearts are moved by a sympathy with the attractions, affinities, instincts and personal affections which proclaim the drawing together of all things; whilst in our deepest nature is awakened a sense of our Divine childhood which seeks and finds access to God.

"He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"—and having His spirit we shall be kept in fellowship with all that is His. And in this fellowship of spirit our moral dispositions and discernments, purged of impurity and free of clouds, will become deep and clear and give to us a *feeling*, which is an intuitive knowledge, of right and wrong, truth and error, good and evil. With this simplicity of disposition and singleness of sight our minds, undisturbed in the exercise of the full integrity of their powers, will find an open door which leads into a knowledge of the rational grounds of all things, giving us our mental inheritance, and an intellectual excellence

corresponding with our moral. "In the case of intellectual excellence, it is considered the highest of gifts to possess an intuitive knowledge of the beautiful in art, or the effective in action, without reasoning or investigating; that this, in fact, is *genius*." But what we need to learn, is that this intellectual excellence in its highest degree is conditioned by its corresponding moral and spiritual excellencies, and to be looked for in those who enjoy that "corresponding insight into moral truth, and have reached that especial perfection in the spiritual part of their nature which is so rarely found and so greatly prized among the intellectual endowments of the soul." And with such moral simplicity of disposition and singleness of sight, securing to us the undisturbed and unperverted exercise of our minds, the body will be used and cared for with the most loving fore-thought, observation and reflection that the mind can bestow upon its precious household of instruments which mediate all our relations with the earth and the world, and do so much to sweeten and sustain our fellowship with heaven. In this way it will become evident to us that Christ is the door to every form of well-being, physical, mental, moral and spiritual, as well as to

man's whole inheritance, and we shall make proof of "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" which makes "godliness profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come." "I am the door;" "I am the way;" "by Me if any man enter in" "he shall inherit all things," have "right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city" of light and love and liberty.

But if we seek to know and enter into anything apart from Him, at our best, we shall be but as those who "climb up some other way," who enter into nothing truly, and possess nothing truly. Thieves and robbers, when most successful, plunder but fragments, which, as such, are destroyed by being broken and removed from their connections and place; do not truly possess what by violent and unlawful hands they hold; and neither know nor enjoy, in any depth or integrity of knowledge or joy, their temporary spoils. Every spoiler loses his spoils. Only through Him who is "the door" can we enter upon the permanent possession of anything. We all know how excluding a false principle is in any sphere of inquiry, how a wrong disposition or the absence of sympathy

keeps us in estrangement and alienation from our fellows, and how a false spirit leaves us "without God and without hope in the world." And it must commend itself to us all that if there is an all-pervading Spirit, the light and life of all things, kindred with the spirit of "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," He must be the door of access to all things, and that apart from Him there can be neither true access to, nor permanent possession of anything. But having Him and entering in by Him we may have an "understanding of all things," and "know the things that are freely given to us of God," for "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God."

4. But He who is the door to all things, and also the way to Himself, does not leave us to ourselves to find the door, BUT OFFERS HIMSELF AS OUR GUIDE TO LEAD US NOT ONLY INTO HIS HOUSE, BUT ALSO TO CONDUCT US TO THE FEAST HIS WISDOM AND LOVE HAVE PREPARED. Listen to Him.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her

seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table: she hath put forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding." "For whoso findeth Me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

He stands at the door and knocks for admission. He offers Himself for our acceptance. He will not force His way, nor obtrude Himself on any one. He cannot do so. Force is alike alien to His nature and ours. He makes His proposals, holds out the highest inducements, plights His troth with "great exceeding precious promises," but waits to be accepted, received, welcomed. Our nature is built on freedom and destroyed by force. Whatever truly enters into us must be received; whatever we truly enter into must be by choice. Man's inheritance is a chosen good.

That He may not be refused He comes early to our door by many messengers bearing timely gifts, and thus prepares for His own approach in person. And

by His sustaining presence in our spirits, as light in darkness that does not comprehend it, He seeks to move us by many sweet propulsions from within answering to His gentle persuasions without. At the earliest hour of our day He knocks at the door of our unconscious faculties and moves at the roots of our unawakened thoughts and feelings. His is the light that first quickens and arrests the eye, His is the voice of gentle love that awakens the ear. His are the tender arms that hold us upon the heart that thrills us with the throb of His love. For He is the source of every good, the giver of every perfect gift, the true giver who gives Himself in all His gifts.

He it is who in our uncorrupted childhood and youth sets before us, in the enacted parables of nature, good and evil, and moves us to the acceptance of the one, and the rejection of the other; from Him is that early credulity which clothes us at first in that implicit trust of childhood which would be the forerunner of our later faith; from His hand is presented the flaming sword which seeks to turn back our thoughts from forbidden ways, that our feet may not forsake His paths. And by all agencies, in ways known and unknown, He prepares us for His own approach, and

seeks to make sure His admission that He may become our accepted guide into the inheritance set before us.

These are some of the secret drawings of the Spirit that seeks to bring us to Christ, the door, that through Him we may find access to God. "For no man cometh to me," says Christ, "except the Father which sent me draw him," "neither cometh any man to the Father but by me." "But by me, if any man enter in he shall go in and out, and find pasture." From the first, then, there is set before us an open door and a heavenly guide. If we receive Him, consent to be led, and follow Him, He will conduct us through a pathway of growing illumination, in fellowship with all light, in sympathy with all truth, and in love with all goodness, to the fountain sources of all things, and "show us things to come." To Him it is the joy of all joys when His creatures accept Him. It was when the Baptist doubted, the Pharisees blasphemed, and the multitude were amazed, that He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All

things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

5. But He who so graciously offers to be our guide that he may lead us into our inheritance, ALSO WARNS US, LEST SLIGHTING THE OPPORTUNITY OF OUR DAY we should come to reject His aid, despise our birthright, and not "knowing the time of our visitation," "the things which belong to our peace should be for ever hidden from our eyes," and the door set open before us should be for ever closed against us.

Our opportunity is a fleeting, not an abiding privilege. It is like a flowing stream which we may use, but cannot detain. Setting out upon the present wave, we shall be borne by it beyond what we can ever reach by any following wave. But opportunity unused is lost, for ever lost. Others may be given us; that is beyond recall. The swiftly-passing NOW is the only

perfectly acceptable time as conditioning every possible good, and leaving no room for repentance or regret.

So likewise our corresponding ability is of no fixed quantity or quality, but either a growing and improvable power by the use of opportunity, or a stunted, degenerating one from opportunity neglected. Neglect of opportunity is ever associated with loss of power. Ability is wedded to its duty, the observance of which conditions, not merely its growth, but alone prevents its becoming less. Ability unused is ability lessened. Wherefore we are called upon to "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The talent laid up is a talent lost. But opportunity used multiplies opportunities, and also our power to use them, while opportunity neglected is not only lost, but lessens the opportunities that remain, and also in a corresponding measure our power to use them.

"Seize, then, the present moments,
For, be assured, they all are messengers;
And though their flight be silent, and their path trackless,
As the winged couriers of the air,
They post to heaven, and there record thy folly;
Because, though stationed on the watch,

Thou, like a sleeping, faithless sentinel,
Didst let them pass unnoticed, unimproved.
And know, for that thou slumberest on the guard,
Thou shalt be made to answer at the bar
For every fugitive.

"Then stay the present instant;
Imprint thy mark of wisdom on its wings.
Oh! let it not elude thy grasp, but like
The good old patriarch upon record,
Hold the fleet angel fast until he bless thee."

Opportunity instantly used, conviction immediately acted upon, light implicitly followed—these are the conditions of an ever-open gate, an ever-widening way, and an ever-growing ability.

The law of all progress makes the first step the condition of the second—the use of that which is lower the means of attaining what is higher. "First, that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual." Nature conditions mind, mind conditions morality, morality conditions religion, religion conditions spiritual life. But the last is also the first. Man's nature is essentially spiritual. If the natural is first, it is also the lowest, and to be valued as a foundation for what is higher. For, as in the physical, we carry our mental powers, so in the mental we carry the require-

ments of morality, and likewise in the moral is contained our demand for religion and godliness. The humblest beginning in the dust is connected with the most exalted consummation in spiritual glory, and nothing but our own unfaithfulness can sever the connection.

The operation of this law gives growing enlargement to the faithful, but obstructs, and ultimately bars, the way to the unfaithful. To the faithful the open door leads into an unobstructed way that branches out into every possible path throughout the dominion of Him from whom all ways proceed, and in whom they all meet. Every way is in agreement with, and illustrative of, every other way, as every truth is a part of the truth, and in agreement with all truths. Genuine sympathy with truth is a relation, and may lead to Him who is the Truth. And the temper of mind which finds open access to God is the temper of mind which will find open access to His works and ways. The Christian mysteries are revealed to no other disposition than that which is most favourable for receiving the revelation of the secrets of nature, and the laws of mind. One stem conducts to a thousand branches, one light divides

into a thousand colours, one door gives access to the whole house, and one spirit "searcheth *all things*, yea, the deep things of God." It is in no restricted sense, therefore, that we speak of Christ as the door. He is the door to all things on earth and in heaven—to all things human and divine. To speak, therefore, of science, philosophy, art, or politics, as spheres of inquiry and research that are independent of Him who is the door to all truth, is to speak foolishly, in forgetfulness of the all-embracing unity of His dominion and Being; and to co-ordinate spheres of truth with that of the truth itself is to degrade them by a false exaltation. Be not then afraid, my young brethren, that by receiving Christ, and entering in by Him, you will not carry with you the Light of all lights, in His Light see light, and find an open way in every department of inquiry to which you may give yourselves.* The Christian disciple has no need to borrow oil of any; his own lamp properly trimmed and supplied from the only fountain-source, will furnish him with the purest light for every investigation in every branch of truth. Be faithful to His light, and keep the heart pure and the eye innocent that you

* This Discourse was also preached before the University of Glasgow.

may be so, and then in whatever sphere you work, your faithfulness will confirm your faith, and faith will be the temper of mind in which all your powers will be at their best, and fitted for their best work.

But if faithfulness leads to faith, unfaithfulness leads to doubt, darkness, and death. The law is "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away that which he seemeth to have." He that is faithful in the least shall be entrusted with more; and he that has been faithful in natural and human things will be entrusted with Divine things; but "who will commit to him the true riches who has been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon." By the operation of this law the way of entrance may become rapidly restricted by the restriction of our ability, until at last we may be deprived of all power, and left outcasts and destitute. It is under this law that waste leads to want, idleness to inability, moral delinquencies to dubiety as to morality itself, at which stage moral feeling begins to wither, and moral discernment becomes perplexed; and with these the religious nature slumbers, the eyes of the understanding are darkened, the ears become

dull of hearing, the heart waxes gross, "the light becomes darkness," spiritual death sets in, and the spiritual world for us ceases to be.

Oh how soon we may begin to lose! Errors of conduct that may appear trivial deprive us of right dispositions, the loss of which leads us to set up wrong principles which falsify the very spirit of our life. By a false spirit our mind becomes misdirected, wrongly exercised and occupied with unrealities, emptiness, and vanity; false desires are awakened that beget corrupt imaginations, which, in their turn, surround and so debase our will that we sanction conduct, in the heat and hurry of temptation, that on reflection we condemn. An inward strife is thus set up in the soul which spends our strength in vexatious conflicts between the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind, the corrupted wishes of the soul and the demands of the will, the wilfulness of wicked devices and the lingering light of the once uncorrupted heart. A divided heart vacillates between good and evil, double-mindedness weakens all the powers of thought, and instability of conduct creates a life disgusted with itself, so that we are no longer capable of serious effort or earnest purpose; our minds lose all keen

interest in truth, our hearts begin to doubt the reality of goodness, and our wills become bewildered—until at length we are "given over to a reprobate mind," incapable of moral feeling, to "do those things that are not convenient," and, blinded by "the god of this world," the light which once shone so bright is hidden from us, and the light which lighted us in coming into the world has become darkness—and we who began our life with an open door inviting us to the inheritance of all things find ourselves outcasts, with the door shut against us, in hopeless destitution, affliction, and torment.

Oh! my brethren, to-day the Saviour calls, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I am the door." "By Me, if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture." "To-day, if ye will hear His voice," seek to enter in. To-morrow may be too late. For, "when once the Master of the House is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not." "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

SERMON XII.

THINKING, FEELING, AND WORKING.

(*Preached on Sunday Evening, March 22, 1860.*)

Acts ix. 6.

"What wilt Thou have me to do?"

THIS is not the question of a man unaccustomed to work. Saul, in natural temperament, disposition, zeal, and consistent activity, was the same man as Paul. In these respects Paul is no other than Saul; but in his deepest nature he is a changed, a new man. New light has shone upon him, and awakened a new life.

He feels that a new life requires new work. The whole course and current of his former life has been arrested, turned back, and seeks a new direction. Saul, while on his way, has been smitten by light

from heaven; blinded by an illumination that stopped him in his course. He felt he could not proceed to do that for which he set out; that as he could no longer be what he had been, he could no longer do what he had done. What was gain to him he now counts loss. What he destroyed he now begins to build up. Light from heaven made him blind to what he had looked upon merely by the light of earth, and opened up to him a new world.

His vision is accompanied by a voice which speaks in a tone of self-commending authority. The vision and the voice agree, proceed from one source, and commend themselves to his conscience. The light that shines upon him is the light of a person, of a life that calls upon him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

1. A new Master is thus revealed to him who speaks with an authority to which he at once submits, confesses a cheerful allegiance, and offers a ready service by asking, WHAT *wilt Thou have me to do?*

His mind immediately surveys the new sphere that has been opened up, and at once considers its requirements. He could no longer give himself to his former work, pursue what he had followed, or value what he

had esteemed. Animated by a new life which takes a new direction, and seeks new objects, he turns to its source to know what he ought to do.

"Without considering *what* we should do we are not likely to do what we ought." Consideration gives definite and practical character to our sense of obligation. With respect to the new life to be cultivated, the new sphere to be occupied, and the relations of the newly-awakened life to the sphere in which it should exercise its powers, Paul felt he needed instruction.

2. Turning to Him whose life is the light of his new world, and whose voice has called him out of his darkness into its marvellous light, he asks, "*What wilt* THOU, LORD, *have me to do?*"

In his new Master he recognises his *Lord.* He feels that he is no longer his own, that he has been ransomed from captivity, bought with a great price, and that He who has purchased him has awakened in him new thoughts, new feelings, and a new will, of which He Himself is the object as well as the source.

He desires therefore to be under the direction of His Lord and Master, that his life may no longer be self-controlled, or self-directed; that animated by no

merely human power he should have no merely finite aim and purpose. He appeals therefore to Him whose life shines with an authority for the conscience, as to an unerring Guide, in whose counsels he will find repose, and in whose service peace, whose ways will be pleasant, and whose commandments "eternal life."

3. His inquiry does not overlook his own individuality. His question is strictly personal, and only concerns himself. *Lord, what wilt Thou have* ME *to do?*

He desires instruction as to the specific duty of a specific individual. He feels that, as he is now a different man, his work must be different, and that as he is a distinct individual, there must be a distinctly individual work for him to do. He asks, therefore, not merely as a Christian disciple what he should do, but what he, as Paul, who once was Saul, ought to do. What wilt Thou have *me* to do? Me, with my education, culture, and habits? Me, with my gifts and endowments, opportunities, and acquired powers? Me, on whom Thy light has shone, separating me from those things to which I had given myself, by bringing me to repentance, converting my judgment, and awakening new affections which devote my will?

The power of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus awakens an intense individuality, which should be a marked characteristic of the agency of the Church, whose force is not the momentum of a multitude, but the power of individuals, the quick and ready tact of individual souls exercising the distinct influence of their individuality.

4. But Paul's question shows us that He at once apprehended not only the individuality of his new life, but its active character. He is moved by it *to work*, and asks, therefore, what he is TO DO.

He feels the life of Christ to be one of intense spiritual power and active purpose; that it is the life of Him who said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and finish His work." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" His allegiance to Christ was felt, therefore, to be one that connected him with the ceaselessly active will, and the working powers of Him by whom are all things,—Creation, Providence, and Grace; all things in view of greater and more glorious results than at present appear; and who makes all things and all creatures instrumental in the

carrying out and fulfilment of His purpose. Paul, smitten by the passion of *His* devotion, cannot be a passive, but must be an earnestly willing, co-operative instrument in His hands. Accordingly, in view of his Master's great purpose, he too is able to say, "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily."

5. *Paul's religion is not*, therefore, *a religion of mere thought, or of mere feeling, but of thought and feeling combined, and completing themselves in action.*

His religion was the re-union of his whole nature to its central working powers. It began with a two-fold act, an act of God calling forth an act of man. Not unwillingly, nor apart from his own will is man's nature re-united to God. An act of God—inviting, reasoning, persuading, and thus calling forth an act of man in attending, considering, and yielding, present the method of man's re-union to God. And as religion begins in action, so by constant action it is kept alive. All its exercises are actions—repentance, faith and sanctification are intensely active exercises of the soul.

Paul felt that his union with Christ gave to his will a new centre—"It is no more I that live but Christ

who liveth in me;" to his thoughts a new subject—Every thought is led into captivity to the obedience of Christ; to his affections a new motive—"The love of Christ constraineth me;" and a new character to his whole life—"For me to live is Christ." "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh is by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Religion, according to the Bible, is man living in the integrity of his nature as possessed of body, soul and spirit; and in the integrity of all his faculties and functions as a creature of thought, feeling and action. The discussions, therefore, which from time to time raise the questions, whether religion is a matter of thought, or of feeling, or of deed; or more of the one or of the other of these, are not biblical. The Bible regards man's nature as undivided and indivisible, and also that no one faculty can be *truly* exercised apart from all the others. We read, therefore, of "the eyes of the heart," "reasoning in the heart," and "reasoning with themselves"—indicating exercises not of one, but of all the faculties at once. Man's powers cannot be divided without being destroyed. Thought

without feeling is dead; feeling without thought is blind; and thought and feeling combined without action are unreal and exhaustive. The great question, therefore, for us all, as furnishing the index to our real character, is not, as to what we think, nor what we feel, but what we do. Thought and feeling are the seed of which action is the fruit. Without works our thoughts and feeling, whatever their character, are "dead, being alone."

The religion of the Bible is the unreserved surrender, the glad devotion of the whole nature to God—of the spirit to Him for His possession; of the soul to the spirit as its charge and care; and of the body to the soul as its instruments for active service. And only when God possesses and inhabits our spirits, and our spirits govern our minds, and our minds control our bodies, will Paul's prayer on behalf of the Thessalonians be fulfilled in us, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord." Sanctify you wholly and for ever, therefore, is his prayer. Religion is a devotion which separates us from the spirit of self and the world by uniting our whole nature to God. "*Religio*

expedit a mundo religatque Deo." His spirit will cultivate the heart, captivate the mind, and sweetly regulate the consecration of the whole life. For this He has given us a perfect law in His new commandment to love, a perfect example in Christ who embodies that law, and a perfect motive in "the love wherewith He hath loved us."

The sphere of outward action may be the last to be reached and occupied, but until it is taken possession of, the Christian life, however thoughtful and emotional, is destitute of integrity and very imperfect. What would you say of a tree which year after year spent all its vitality in making roots, or which brought forth only leaves, or perhaps blossoms, or at the very utmost unripe fruit? Such a tree, if it managed to keep itself alive for a while, could have no reproductive power, and in time must die out, leaving behind it no representative. I need not tell you that in the Bible trees are men, and that fruitfulness is the evidence by which we are taught to judge of the genuineness, depth and enduring character of their life. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Every branch in Me," says Christ, "that beareth not fruit, the Father taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He

purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." But He goes on to say, "Herein is My Father glorified—that ye bear *much* fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Fruit-bearing conditions, you see, discipleship. Honest work is ever fruitful of true wit. Faithfulness in action leads to faith. He who does the will of God knows the doctrine. Deeds which are the fruit of thought and feeling become the seeds of deeper thought, intenser feeling and a completer life. The life that endures is a life organised by decisions of the will and expressed in deeds, whereas the life of mere thought and feeling must be likened to that of the barren fig-tree that bore "nothing but leaves," and was looked upon as burdening the earth and only preparing fuel for its own destruction.

What fruit is to the tree, action is to thought and feeling, that in which the life completes itself, and becomes reproductive; that without which, at the best, it is feeble and imperfect and ready to pass away. Thought and feeling which do not complete themselves in something done, must have been arrested in their natural tendencies by some more powerful though unnatural influence, and, like the waste of restless waters of a chopping sea, where by adverse

currents the wave-action has been broken, becomes an awful, restless waste of man's best powers. There is a sad sickliness about all thought and feeling which do not embody themselves in deeds, an unreality about all speculative thought, a fictitiousness about all sentimental emotion. The reaction of practical life upon thought and feeling is necessary to give them verified reality. It is for this reason that those who greatly occupy themselves with books of speculation and fiction, without any intentional effort to give immediate practical effect in embodied work to their excited thoughts and feelings, are found to be in a morally unhealthy and miserable condition. They have no practical integrity of nature, or of experience, no muscle or bone in their soul's life. Thought and feeling are unnaturally stimulated because divorced from action. A dreamy indulgence of mental and emotional intoxication is set up, incapable of more than a weak inflation of mental and emotional life, because destitute of the invigorating, organizing influence of responsible deeds.

There is much reason to fear that the sense of responsibility with respect to thought and feeling is very feeble, and also that there is too

much forgetfulness of the fact that irresponsible thought and feeling are very unreal. Every human power derives its integrity, and the full sense of its reality, only when exercised in union with, and confirmed by the experience of the action of every other power. Our real world and our real life are derived from the exercise of no one, but all our faculties. Seeing requires hearing, and both require handling, in order to make the evidence of our senses complete. In like manner, to give verified realization to thought and feeling, they must complete themselves in deeds. Action verifies our thought and substantiates our feeling. It is as the fruit of their seed-principles in our inner life.

For the sake, therefore, of thought and feeling, that they may have reality and reproductive power, we must demand their expression and embodiment in action. Nothing will be found to impart so much health to the soul as the habit of instantly giving practical effect to our thoughts and emotions. This will give reality to our inner life, as well as certain security for its progress. It will also be the best corrective for our errors. Active Christianity will be found to correct all the heresies, and the con-

sistent working out in deeds of Christian thought and feeling will not only make a man orthodox, in the truest sense of the word, but give to his life a vigorous reproductive energy. Our life deposits and matures its seed-principles only in deeds. We do what we truly believe, and by works is our faith made manifest. If, therefore, the life we regard as our highest is only a thought-life, or an emotioned life, whatever it may be to ourselves, or do for ourselves, we should not be surprised that it does not sow itself in those about us, or perpetuate itself in our children. The tree that reproduces itself must bring forth more than leaves or blossoms, or even unripe fruit. It must "bring forth fruit to perfection," a fruit which matures, and from which is deposited its seed, otherwise, with the cessation of its own life its kind dies out, leaving no representative in its place. And know you of no families in which there was religion, but in which there is religion no longer? With the death of the parents the religion of the household died. Whatever it was to them it sowed no living seed in the children, and consequently has ceased to be. Now what the world wants, and what the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus requires, is neither a muscular, nor a mental, nor an emotional, nor a

wilful, but a truly human Christianity, an embodiment of its spirit, by man's *whole* nature to the devotion of all his powers, and the complete sanctification of body, soul, and spirit.

Let none of us, therefore, take comfort from our being the subjects of inactive religious thought and feeling; rather let us be alarmed. It is a subtle device by which we are led to give our active life to the world and self all the more undisturbedly, because we are passively subjects of religious thought and feeling. It is appalling to consider the amount of religious thought, feeling, and talk, as compared with the amount of practical godliness. Depend upon it, my brethren, there is nothing more fatally injurious to our piety than our coming to regard "religious exercises" as ends in themselves, religious prayer, praise, and meditation, which are not entered upon under a sense of responsibility for a corresponding life in deeds. It is easy to be religious in thought, pious in sentiment, and saintly in words. But if any man will be a Christian, "let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me," said Christ; and he who seeks to obey the Master will find it not an easy work, but most profitable and blessed. If in

our religious thought there is not a deed-force, in our religious feeling a *practical* inspiration, and in our religious talk a *purposed intention of work*, they become of all things the most ruinous to our souls. "There are ways which seem right, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

But let all thought end in a decision of the will, all feeling be an impulse which leads to action, and all talk a stimulus, and an instruction for work, then spiritual fervour will make our daily business a Divine work, in which we shall be not slothful but diligent, and our diligence will be a useful service to men that will be an acceptable offering to God. Then, when the refinements of thought are the reticulated roots of feeling — deep, delicate, and delicious — that only prompts to deeds, we shall find in our daily work the constant confirmation of our deepest life. And the evidence for all that is most dear to us, as children of hope and a great expectation, will no longer be from the Q. E. D. of a logical process, but from a heart warmed, a mind illumined, and a whole nature refreshed and ennobled. Impressions of the eternal fitness of things will be constantly borne in upon us through all the avenues of our experience, which will

give to our spiritual life a ready assurance concerning all the great verities of our faith that may be compared to the certitude we derive from our "common-sense" experience with respect to the outward affairs and relations of our life in the world. Practical godliness not only furnishes the solution in which we can alone rest, of the great questions which are awakened in the soul, but also gives experimental demonstration of the fitness of the provisions of God's grace, revealed to us in the Gospel narratives, to satisfy all the wants of our fallen nature. As we value, then, peace of mind, strength of heart, and an assurance of hope that will never forsake us, let us make our great question, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me* TO DO?

We too often ask our so-called "interests," our wishes, our inertness and love of ease, our whims, tempers, pride and even passions—what we are to do. Who of us daily asks, with obedient intention of heart of our LORD, "What wilt *Thou* have me to do?"—Of Him, who, in this as in every other respect, is our example as well as our teacher. For "He pleased not Himself," but "always did the things that pleased the Father."

We frequently ask what other persons are to do,—

"Lord, what shall this man do?"—but how seldom what we ourselves are to do, distinctly emphasizing our individual nature, circumstances and opportunity! What wilt Thou have *me* to do? Me, with my one talent? Me, with little time, and less opportunity? Me, a hearer of the Gospel? Me, a secret disciple? Me, whose life is so frittered away in endless little duties? Me, who am always dreaming what great things I would do if I were only in some other position, or some one else?

Oh, let us remember that none of us are called to do great things! Very few are even permitted to do what seems to us great. Great things, if we had powers and opportunity for them, would be more than our vain nature could safely carry. But "*least*" things we may safely do, and these are within the power and opportunity of all. And we know Who it is that said, "Whosoever shall give unto one of these *little* ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward;" and also, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the *least* of these ye did it not to Me." Also the thing that lies to our hand we may do. "Whatsoever

thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Art thou only a hearer of the word? Then be a doer and no longer deceive thyself. Art thou a secret disciple? Remember that it is written, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." Does thy life appear to thee to be frittered away because wholly occupied in apparently trivial, though necessary, duties? Then seek a noble purpose which shall bind up its fragments. Is it not written, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?" This, whoever thou art, thou mayest do. And than such a life can there be a more noble! Art thou dissatisfied with thy situation and calling, and dreamest of great things if thou wert but in some more favourable position? Be assured that if thy present place is not the best for thee, that strict faithfulness to its duties will be the readiest and the only Divine way out of it.

But are there none here who are so exceptionally endowed, placed, and circumstanced that Christ expects from them exceptional services, and is asking them, "What do ye *more* than others?" He who asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" is asking some of us the same question, is asking it of you who have been prayed for more than others; of you who have had more forgiven than others; of you who have been entrusted with more talents than others; of you who have no need to labour for your daily bread as others; of you who are married, but have no children to care for; of you who are widows, and who may make your Lord your husband, and exclusively seek to please Him; of you who are highly-educated and cultured, and have more knowledge, refinement, and taste than others, and who should do more than others to enlighten, lessen the rudeness, and elevate the desires of those about you; of you who have much goods laid up for many years, and have need of nothing, "who should be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, fathers to the poor, and searchers for the cases that you know not." We may not forget, my brethren, that we are only released

from lower necessities by being brought under higher obligations. Death is the only purchase-price of the fancied right to be idle. Is there not a "lounging class" in the Church as well as in the world, who are dead while they seem to live, and who forget that it is written in the Book, the authority of which they profess not to question, "This we commanded you when we were with you, if any man would not work, neither should he eat?" He who alone among men embodied perfect freedom, nevertheless confesses Himself the subject of an inner needs-be to labour. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

And in conclusion let us also remember that every kind of work in which we engage with divided powers will have but its own divided reward. Bodily exercise "profiteth little," and but for a little time; business-diligence will be remunerated with its own profit; mental labour will reap its own reward; emotional fervour will be recompensed with its own return. But would you reap a true human reward, in all its integrity, then you must carry the integrity of your nature into all your work. And he only who does

all things to the glory of God can be whole in what he does. But this is a power and a privilege common to us all.

"If in our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

* * * * *

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

SERMON XIII.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST ABOVE ALL HEAVENS THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS.

(Preached on Sunday Morning, February 13, 1859.)

EPHESIANS iv. 9, 10.

"Now the *fact that* He ascended, what doth it imply but that He also descended into the lower *parts* of the earth? HE THAT DESCENDED, He it is that ascended up above all heavens that He might fill all things."

THE Gospel of God by which we became Christians, and which, as Christians, we are commissioned to preach to every creature, consists of a series of facts—things done, as opposed to matters of thought or speculation; things done beyond the ordinary course of nature and the constitution of this world, having therefore a miraculous character, and, as such, divinely-revealed. Moreover, the facts of the Gospel are facts concerning a person, embodied and presented

in the history of His life; a body of facts, therefore, which, in accordance with their very nature and purpose, as forming a complete Revelation of God to man, possess an organic wholeness which suffers no addition and permits nothing to be taken away. And, still further, it is a body of facts which, though presented in the brief story of a short life, are the fruit of all previous, the seed of all future history. As facts, they are "worthy of all acceptation," and are thoroughly established on evidence satisfactory to the reason. Nevertheless, such is our reason and such is their character, they only appeal with confidence to that awakened faculty of our nature, the soul of all our powers, with which we stand in communication with the world of real Being and God. They are facts, therefore, adapted and designed to test man's disposition with respect to the truth concerning himself, the Divine nature, and the spiritual world. They are of such a nature that they commend themselves to the conscience, and are so fitted to meet man's great wants that they approve themselves to his mind and heart. On this ground the Church is commissioned to declare them throughout the world as the Gospel of God to every creature "worthy of all

acceptation." These facts owe nothing to force—nothing to argument—nothing to "words of man's wisdom." They shine with their own light, press on the conscience with their own weight, by their own nature fathom the depths of human character, and discern and expose the thoughts and intents of the heart. The mind of man is constituted capable of receiving, with an assurance of conviction which demands action, what it is incapable of comprehending or explaining. The great and glorious truths of the Gospel are connate with his original nature, and belong to that highest order of life, which is absolutely central to universal Being, and although transcending all creaturely comprehension, are nevertheless perfectly adapted to human acceptation. Our receptive capacity is not measured by the power of our understanding, much less our powers of explanation. Not that for a moment we would have it supposed that faith—the function of the soul's faculty which mediates our relation to the infinite and eternal—and reason are opposed to each other, any more than the telescope is opposed to the microscope; rather would we maintain that faith is but the highest function of the reason exercised towards the things of God

and the spiritual world, and no other than what men ordinarily exercise with respect to every *ultimate* truth whether it be of science or of Revelation. Faith and reason have, however, their own spheres and limits. And all ultimate truths, which are not susceptible while independent of logical proof, are received by faith and by faith alone. By nature, therefore, we are constituted for the reception of things inexplicable and incomprehensible, and such, as to their nature and range, are the facts of the Gospel, which, nevertheless, are worthy of all acceptation.

From these facts the inspired writers seldom draw inferences. Their ultimate issues are declared, immediate and intermediate ones are passed over; primary consequences are spoken of, whilst silence is maintained with respect to secondary results. Room enough and to spare is therefore left for speculation, that the character of our disposition with respect to the Gospel may be put to the test. For the facts are so momentous, their range so vast, their nature so heavenly, that it transcends the highest powers of the imagination to conceive of their infinite relations, much less to comprehend and fill up the sphere to which they belong. Comparing great

things with small, we may liken them to some of the facts of astronomy, that make us acquainted with suns, each the centre of numerous worlds, all filled with its light and subject to its influence, but of which we know nothing. Nevertheless, the influence of those subject-worlds may be greater, though we are ignorant of its nature, than that of many other worlds lying within the range of our vision. And who can doubt the immeasurable influence of those spiritual truths made known to us in connection with the facts of the Gospel which we fail to comprehend only because they are truths too exalted for our present faculties?

Of these facts of the Gospel our text presents one, the crowning one, which, like a flower, the outcome and crown of the whole plant, pre-supposes and gathers up all the rest. The ascension of Christ (His resurrection completed) sums up, according to Paul, the whole Gospel, and stamps it with the seal of Heaven—the seal of the union between Heaven and earth, the visible and the invisible, the finite and the infinite, time and eternity, God and man. The fact of the ascension supplies the only ground for the hope of mankind. "If Christ be not raised

our faith is vain," "and man at his best estate is altogether vanity," "walketh in a vain show and disquieteth himself in vain." Aristotle tells us of Plato's dialogues that they were but beautiful dreams without rational foundation or conclusion, ingenious stories to embody his spiritual instincts rather than to furnish a rational ground capable of sustaining the sublime hopes they seek to embody. How different this from the Gospel which furnishes us with facts that are not only capable of sustaining the hopes of the world, but of inspiring hopes which infinitely transcend the highest imaginations of man's unaided powers to conceive, and which daily in our midst prove their Divine source by quickening dead souls, cleansing polluted hearts, and breaking the chains of evil habits!

I feel, therefore, brethren, I cannot be wrong, on an occasion like the present,* in inviting you to a renewed consideration of this fact, the foundation and crown of the world's hope. And in doing so let me ask you first of all to consider it in the light of its previous and preparatory history;

* This Sermon was preached at Bloomsbury Chapel, London, in behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.

then to look at it in the light of its declared purpose, partially fulfilled in all subsequent history; and in conclusion briefly to consider the Divine method for the fulfilment of this purpose.

1. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST LOOKED AT IN THE LIGHT OF ITS PREVIOUS AND PREPARATORY HISTORY. That the Son of Man ascended from the deepest depth of human history and experience, from the lower parts of the earth, up above all Heavens, pre-supposes His descent.

"That he ascended, what does it imply but that He descended," and that His original home was above the Heavens? He ascends to no height from which He did not descend. No one can transcend the powers of His nature. If He ascended above all Heavens, it is conclusive that He must first of all have descended. In short, to use His own words, that "He came out from God and came into the world" before He could again leave the world and enter upon His inheritance of the Father's glory. "He who *was* rich became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich." "He was the Word with God, and was God," and "became flesh," that man who had been made captive by the flesh might be

delivered, and "in His flesh" restored to "see God." His ascension celebrates the triumph of man's deliverance, for which He came out from God and descended to the depths of his fallen and captive estate.

It, therefore, presents to us a fact which must be regarded as the grand consummation of a marvellous history—a consummation only fitting and becoming that history which began with "His coming out from God." And having come out from God, and come into the world, and lived a life above the level of this world's history, it was the only fitting and becoming conclusion to His course that He should again leave the world and ascend to the Father. And His history which thus began above all the Heavens, where, in His eternal Being, He was with God and in the form of God, by His coming forth from the Father, laying aside His royal robes and emptying Himself of His glory in order to come into the world—was continued by His descent to the virgin's womb; carried on by His birth in helplessness and unconsciousness; by His life of absolute dependence under all the limitations of man's earthly nature; by His subjection to temptation, trial, and suffering; by His atoning sacrifice; by His agony and passion; by His cross and burial;

by His descent to the house of the departed—where, having been put to death in the flesh, but held in life in the spirit, He preached to the spirits in prison of the deliverance He had wrought, in order that being chastened by judgment, they might in spirit live unto God; and then was gloriously consummated by His triumphant Resurrection from the grave in the possession of "all power," the power of the glory which He had before all worlds, ready for its heavenly expansion into all the glory of the Father's house and the Father's throne. And after tarrying upon the confines of Heaven and earth for forty days, passing and repassing the limits of the visible, ministering to His disciples and speaking to them of the things concerning His kingdom, and thus making evident to them the identity of His person, and also the exaltation of His nature, He led them out as far as to Olivet, and there, while with uplifted hands, He confirms, with a blessing, the promise of the Father, He rose from their midst, and without being unclothed, was clothed upon with heavenly garments until, parted from them by a cloud, He was carried up into Heaven.

Let us now see how this marvellous history of His

descent and manifestation in the flesh stands connected with a vast and universal history, of the spirit of which His incarnation is the outbirth. The history of Christ's manifestation in the flesh cannot be separated from the history of Judaism, nor can the history of Judaism be separated from the earliest history of mankind. And it is equally certain that the development of Jewish history alone reveals the power of the development of human history which it carries on in the gradual fulfilment of the earliest declared purpose of God. Their history began with the first Adam, the earth-born man, and ends with the second Adam, the Heaven-born man, Who more than restores whatever was lost by the first, reconciles all nature and mankind to Himself, and re-clothes man in the image of God. The history of the Jews, therefore, contains a complete history of humanity, and also a complete history of the Revelation of God. God is satisfactorily revealed in that history which begins with His first promise to fallen man, and ends with Him in Whom the glory of God in all its fulness is pleased to dwell. Jewish history is interwoven with that of the earth and man. It carries the only uninterrupted stream of human life, and conducts us from man in Paradise

to man on the throne of universal dominion. In its course, it reveals to us the Jews made subject for a time to each, in turn, of the great powers of the world, that they might receive the benefits of their experience, and possess themselves of whatever among them was of value for the purpose of their history. They suffer captivity in order to make conquests that in their imperishable history nothing should be lost. Therefore Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome are all brought into relation with Judaism. Neither of them passes away without yielding up to the Jew whatever they possessed in relation to the permanent results of human history. And whilst their subjection to, and captivity by other nations become the means of their conquests for the benefit of the world, they themselves were chastened and purified by the things which they suffered. What saith the Lord by His servant Amos the prophet? "I will command and I will sift the House of Israel among all nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." In accordance with this we do but report the records of history when we say that Jews have not only been found in every quarter of the globe, but in every nation of the world.

The rich variety and manifoldness of Jewish history, though the result of natural causes, are, nevertheless, the fulfilment of the Divine purpose, that their history should possess a typical and symbolical character with respect to the rich contents and character of Christ and His kingdom, which it was intended to shadow forth. Consequently, we find it presenting in succession a patriarchal, theocratic, monarchic, and priestly character and government, in order that there may be presented in detail and earthly shadow the riches of the heavenly and eternal kingdom of God—the created sphere for the display of His fulness in whom all fulness dwells. The history of the Jews may, therefore, be likened to the growth of a mighty tree which sent its roots out into every land and gathered strength from every soil, until it embodied the significance and represented the virtues of the whole earth, and then gathered up all its force and beauty into a single blossom, and that single blossom ripened a single seed which, sown in the earth, produced the tree of life, the leaves of which should be for the healing of the nations. Now, that He ascended, what does it imply but that He first of all descended, and in His descent became the hidden presence and

controlling power of the world's history until the old world passed away in His death and the new world rose in His Resurrection? This is now, as a matter of history, beginning to make itself evident.

2. WE HAVE NOW TO LOOK AT THIS FACT OF OUR LORD'S ASCENSION IN THE LIGHT OF ITS DECLARED PURPOSE—"That He might fill all things," which will reveal its connection with the vaster and ever-enlarging history of the world subsequent to His leaving the earth and His being carried up above all Heavens. As we have seen the history of the ancient world concentrate itself in His death, so now we have to look at the rise and history of the modern world which proceeds from His Resurrection, and, under the controlling power of His Spirit, is preparing the great consummation, spoken of in our text, when He shall fill all things and the grand circle of the Divine Revelation be complete. For "of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things"—all things absolutely. The expression is quite unrestricted—"*all things*." We rejoice at this use of the neuter by St. Paul, and at his frequent reference to impersonal creatures as exhibiting the unlimited character of the claims He makes for Christ and the sphere of His fulness—

"that He might fill all *things*." He thus makes His all-pervading, all-sustaining, all-energizing Presence in His Logos-relations a sphere for His fulness as the Incarnate Logos, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, and implies that, apart from the power of His ascended glory as the Great Redeemer, all things and all persons would be relatively empty and possessed of only a "vain show," a shadowy form of existence—"ready to vanish away." Whereas in relation to Him all things are hungry and thirsty to be fully possessed by Him, without whom they were destitute of all-abiding worth and of all the glow and glory of their proper nature as the sphere for the display of His fulness in whom all fulness and all glory are pleased to dwell. For just as our summer-sun climbs to the full height of the heavens in order to fill the earth with his light and heat, and call forth from her slumbering bosom the powers of the seed sown there, so Christ has ascended that He may call forth the full harvest of light and life and love which He has sown in man's nature; and as in winter, under the sun's decline, our fields become naked, empty, and barren, so, apart from the power of Christ's ascended glory, man's

nature and man's history appear but in winter garments, and are unproductive of abiding fruit. Christ is our righteous Sun and Sun of Righteousness, and when He fills our heavens with His glory, He will fill our earth with His fulness.

But, in order to sustain my remarks upon a sufficient Scriptural basis, let me call your attention to a selection of those Scriptures which teach us the relations of our ascended Redeemer, and reveal the glory of the great future, when all things shall embody the power, and wear the beauty of His fulness which filleth all. And let us begin with the teaching of Paul where, having traced the marvellous history of His descent, he adds, "Wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in Heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess Him Lord to the glory of God the Father;" "that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth." And St. Peter, to the same effect, in his address to the people who wondered at the lame man having been

healed, says, "God shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you: whom the Heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began;" and in his second epistle he writes, "Seeing, then, that all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat; nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." And again, Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God;" and in the connection of the text, speaking of the distribution of the various gifts of His grace among the members of His body, "for the work of the

ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ," he adds—"Till we all come unto the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man' —that is, the unity of humanity; or, as it has been termed, "the colossal man"—"unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "Then cometh the end, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, and all enemies under His feet, when all things shall be subdued unto Him and God shall be all and in all." And "every creature which is in Heaven and which is on earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," shall be heard saying, "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." "And I saw," says John, "a new Heaven and a new earth—for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away—and I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be

His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.'"

Now, brethren, what has been the effect upon our minds as these passages fell upon our ears? May we not compare it to that produced upon the mind of an astronomer as his glass sweeps the heavens and brings in succession within the field of his vision those meek points of light which shine in darkness, and, whilst revealing nothing of the vast spheres of which they are the centres, overwhelm him with awe and inquiring wonder as to the spheres his instruments cannot reach, but which these suns fill with light and, doubtless, clothe with endless forms of life and beauty! Similarly, concerning our text, viewed in the light of these Scriptures, may we not in wondering amazement ask what is not embraced by the fact—that the Son of Man ascended from the lower parts of the earth, from the depths of human history and human experience, up above all Heavens that He might fill all things—that there might be a manifested fulness answering to and satisfying His fulness in whom all fulness is pleased to dwell, a fulness which should be a satisfactory display of the unsearchable riches of His grace and glory! In the ascension of Christ we

have a fact which from its very nature and character not only allows of great demands being made upon it, but calls upon us to make them. From a fact so vast and glorious, our demands not only cannot be too great, but must fall immeasurably short of its infinite relations and consequences. Let us, however, briefly consider it, *first of all with respect to the new heavens and the new earth; then with respect to our nature and history; and lastly, with respect to the providence and government of God*—as parts of the great whole to be filled from the fulness of the ascended Son of Man.

First.—WITH RESPECT TO THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH, what may we not infer, from the ascension of Christ in the full integrity of His nature, as to the conversion, transformation, and ennobling of the material of our earthly sphere? The nature and history of His person clearly reveal the relations between Heaven and earth, the material and the spiritual, God and man. We cannot for a moment look upon the transformation and exaltation of Christ's nature as an isolated fact, or as dissociated from "the restitution of all things" of which, Peter says, when speaking of His ascension

—"whom the Heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." The history of Jesus, as the second Adam, belongs to and is interwoven with the very history of the earth. Nature and human nature can never be separated. Nature fell by man's fall; nature is restored in man's restoration; and will share his glory. Man and the earth are inseparable. Man's body is an essential part of his nature. The union of the body and soul in man celebrates the marriage between the dust of the ground and the breath of God, and man is only man so long as this union is maintained. It was in His body that Christ ascended to Heaven. The second Adam, as to the constituents of His nature, is like unto the first; He is the Son of Man, but "the Son of Man with power," that is, endowed with the Spirit of God in unmeasured fulness. The nature with which He rose from the dead and ascended up into Heaven was essentially the same nature in which He was crucified—though exalted and its mortality swallowed up of life. Must we not say, then, that the body in which He ascended in its relation to the body of His humiliation illustrates and

partakes of the relation of the present heavens and earth to the new heavens and the new earth? And, in accordance with this, are there not innumerable transformations everywhere continually going on, of which the ascension of His body is the first-fruits and crown. Flowers escaping from their root-prisons, winged-insects of grace and beauty from grovelling grubs, vapours risen from their heavy beds, light called forth from dark materials, electricity from ponderable elements, the strange affinities of matter ever struggling to form new combinations, the unerring instincts of animal life held in perplexing bondage—all seem to point with prophetic finger to a future deliverance and an ennobled condition for which they wait in the earnest expectation of their share in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And in this enumeration mention is only made of those changes and transformations which are obvious, but how many more, and greater, are there which are hidden by the slowness with which they are carried on, in the elements of the world, in the creation which is going on within the creation, the creation which groweth within the sphere of created elements; changes and transformations hidden in the deep

bowels of the earth and the invisible heights of Heaven, changes of the earth only revealed by her convulsions, or in the sea-worn cliffs, changes of the heavens which science makes known in the prism of the stars; changes by the conversion and transformation of matter which are being made in an ever-increasing ratio of progress—all silently pointing to the new world, the new heaven and the new earth of which Christ's risen and ascended body must be regarded as only the first-fruits, and together with all the known and unknown changes that ceaselessly take place, composing the pathway to His throne with whom a thousand years are but as a yesterday, or a dream in the night when it is past! *Now* the fulness of Christ is only a potential fulness, and, in His own words, to be regarded as the smallest of seeds, but by-and-bye, just as the hidden fulness of His power and glory broke forth, transformed and clothed His own body, so shall His fulness hidden in all things break forth, transform and clothe the whole earth with glory. For as in winter the power of the beauty of our fields is shut up and imprisoned, only waiting for the ascension of the summer's sun to be released in order

to renew the face of the earth, so in like manner Christ from the height of His glory shall shine forth and fill all things with His light and heat and restore them to Himself. In the ennobling of material organisations we have the promise of a complete transformation of nature. And by this transformation is there not being prepared a fitting home for the spiritual bodies of all the departed? For if we carry the germ of our future glorified bodies, what germinal forces may there not be carried in the bosom of the elements from which shall come forth the new Heaven and the new earth? There must be unity in all God's works and ways, a correspondence between all the several parts. And when we see His only-begotten Son, clothed in a body like our own, exalted above all the heavens; in that sight we have before us the all-glorious and controlling centre of all his spheres, the key which interprets the testimony of prophecy, the gathered first-fruits of a new and redeemed world. The Gospel, therefore, contains a Gospel for nature as well as for man, the prediction of the day when the strife of elements shall cease, when the powers of darkness shall be swallowed up of light, when the lion shall lie down with the

lamb, when the tares shall no longer grow with the wheat, when creation, now so weary, shall lift up her head and rejoice in the Redemption for which she groans and travails.

Secondly.—Having seen what we are taught by the ascension of Christ with respect to the new heavens and the new earth, LET US NOW CONSIDER WHAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM IT WITH RESPECT TO MAN. For if we cannot dissociate the history of Jesus from the history of the earth, much less are we able to do so from the history of mankind. He almost always speaks of Himself as "the Son of Man." It is His favourite name. We find it more than fifty times in the Gospels, and often in a sense very peculiar and strikingly significant. When he wishes to ascertain from His disciples what they thought of Him and whom they took Him to be, He asks them, "Whom do men say that I the *Son of Man* am?" Peter replies on behalf of himself and his fellow-disciples, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." You see *He* speaks of Himself as "*the Son of Man*," whilst His disciples looked upon Him as "*the Son of God*." At another time, when the high-priest said to Him, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us

whether Thou be the Christ, *the Son of God*," He replies, "Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see *the Son of Man* sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." On another occasion, when He wished to warn a certain Scribe who expressed a desire to follow Him, He did so by telling Him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but, although *the Son of Man*, He hath not where to lay His head," for such is the force of His language. Again, He gives as a reason for his lordship over the Sabbath, that He is *the Son of Man.* And still more striking is His use of this name when He says that the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment *because* He is *the Son of Man.* And when He speaks of Himself as coming again in "the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory," it is still as "*the Son of Man.*" Now, these uses of the expression, "*the Son of Man*," require a sense to be attached to it which is quite unique and peculiar. It is only as we give it an all-embracing significance that we can satisfy the requirement of the sense in its several applications. But when we regard it as referring to His Logos-relations to man, united, and made manifest by His

Incarnation, the expression, the Son of Man, becomes equivalent to His calling Himself the Son of Humanity, as humanity exists in the Father, of Whom He is "the only-begotten Son." He is humanity brought out to view—its root and fulness and crown. Humanity otherwise than in Him has no complete existence: is only an idea waiting its fulfilment. For no aggregate of men, short of the fulness of His body, make up humanity. Humanity is destitute of personality otherwise than as embodied in Him. Individual men have but the personality of individuals, but the united personality of men only exists in Him who is the fountain-source of human life. And it is in this sense that He is spoken of, and speaks of Himself, as *the Son of Man.*

In the integrity of His nature, as the Son of Man, as the root and crown of humanity, He ascended to the right hand of God. His ascension pre-supposes his descent and all the facts of His history, of which it is but the inevitable consummation. In His ascension we have, therefore, the earnest of the deliverance and exaltation of human nature. For the exaltation of the Son of Man is the exaltation of the fountain-source of human life. In Jesus Christ the headship of

mankind is at the right hand of God with full powers of deliverance and exaltation for all men. For if He who is the underlying ground of every human existence, "the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," became incarnate and lived a holy life for us, that He might show Himself to be the Lamb of God without spot or blemish, and a fit offering for the sin of the whole world, then in Him all men lived a holy life before God; and if he offered Himself a sacrifice for all, then in Him all were offered up in sacrifice, "for if one died for all then all died;" and if He who died for all rose again for all, then all rose; and if He who died for all and was raised up for all ascended up into heaven for all, then all ascended, and the power of glory for all sits at the right hand of God in Him who is the Son of Man exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. In His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, therefore, the powers of humanity are delivered, redeemed, and glorified.

And it is for this reason—that the Son of Man stands for mankind, represents mankind, and embodies in the unity of His person the essential powers of humanity, that the Scriptures are so very careful to prove, without the possibility of mistake, that it was

the *Son of Man*, in the full integrity of His nature, who ascended up above all heavens. Everything in the New Testament is made to centre in the Resurrection and Ascension of the *body* of Christ. Its writers know nothing of the empty philosophical idea of the immortality of an unclothed spirit. How patiently and anxiously does Christ Himself, after His Resurrection, seek to establish beyond doubt in the minds of His disciples that He is the same that He was before His crucifixion. "Behold," says He to them, "my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And He shewed them His hands and His feet. And while they believed not for joy and wondered," in order still further to convince them, "He said unto them, have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them." What will He not do, what will He not submit to, in order to assure them that He is Jesus, their Lord and Master, the very same though exalted and ennobled! And that too not merely during the forty days in which He lingered upon the confines of Heaven and earth, passing and

repassing the bounds which separate the visible and the invisible, but during the forty years whilst the canon of Scripture was being completed. For after His ascension He re-appears at three different times, but on each occasion expressly as *the Son of Man*, that it may be an established fact, that in His ascended glory *the Son of Man* is still the same that He was during His sojourn upon earth. When He appears through the opening Heavens to the first martyr, Stephen, it is as "*the Son of Man* standing on the right hand of God." When Saul is smitten to the ground by the glory of His presence, and asks Him "who art thou, Lord?" He replies, "*I am Jesus*," the man of history, "whom thou persecutest." And when the aged John, the disciple whom He loved, was so overpowered with the glory of His appearance that he fell at His feet as dead, it is still by the glory of one "like unto *the Son of Man*," who laid His right hand upon him and lifted him up, saying unto him, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." Throughout the testimony of His Resurrection-life the emphasis is laid upon this, that it is

the Son of Man in the integrity of His embodied nature that rose from the grave and ascended up into Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God endowed with all the powers of His Eternal Kingdom.

By His ascension, therefore, our nature is endowed with an exalted fulness, and clothed with a glory becoming the Son of God. Henceforth, the glory of the Son of God breaks forth upon, clothes, and ennobles the Son of man. Oh! how little do we know from our present experience what belongs to us—what a fulness of glorious and blessed life is ours —as those *to* whom and *in* whom Christ is revealed; but *upon* whom the glory of His hidden life is destined to break forth! Are we not, though named by His name, too often empty, cold, and naked, having Christ in us more as a dry root in dry ground than a living plant in a well-watered soil, full of sap, and clothed with foliage, flower, and fruit? How few of us know anything of the "inspiration" of the Holy Ghost! Yet believing, as we do, the reality of our relation to the exalted Son of man, and that "they who are joined to the Lord are one spirit" with Him, what should we not infer from our observation and experience of the power of lower inspirations to make

us so different both in body and mind—with respect to the power of the spirit of the life of Christ wholly to transfigure, exalt, and ennoble our nature whilst confirming its identity! How altogether marvellous are the powers which slumber in man, only needing to be awakened! What a different being a man becomes under the temporary dominion of an aroused passion! What different men the disciples of our Lord were after His ascension, as compared with what they were after His crucifixion! Compare them with themselves—their state before their pentecost with what it was after its celebration. But, how few Christians ever celebrate their pentecost on earth! We too often know Christ more after the flesh than after the Spirit, so that our pentecost still tarries, and will tarry until we are endowed with His power from on High. How little, then, are we able to estimate what we shall become when the glory given to Christ shall be given to us, and so revealed in us as to break forth upon us that we shall not only be filled with all the fulness of God, but be clothed in His image, and see Him as He is! But, with respect to all this, our pledge and heavenly guarantee is the exaltation and glorification of our nature in the Son of Man on the

throne of God. In Him the whole fulness of God has a home in which it is pleased to dwell. In Jesus our nature is filled with all the fulness and clothed with all the glory of the Father.

And, as such, He is exalted above the Heavens on our behalf, *as the centre of a new kingdom—a human kingdom—"the kingdom of God and of His Christ."* It is reserved for human nature to constitute *the Home-kingdom* of God. Men are to be brought under the dominion of His highest and innermost government —to be bound to His throne by an allegiance springing from the deepest and tenderest qualities of the Divine and human natures—the mercy of God and the penitence of man. *The* kingdom of God is to be set up in our nature, and to unite the innermost powers of humanity with the innermost powers of Deity.—But this kingdom of God is also to be the *temple* of God, not merely a divine dominion lying round about and without the immediate presence of the King, and only indirectly and mediately associated with Him, but the sphere of His household presence—His home—the very life of which will be the enjoyment and worship of Himself. This home-kingdom is to be gathered together, so that every

part of it shall be in direct relation to the King, to possess organic shape and form, which shall embody and express the very laws and government of its control, and be fitted to wear the glory of Him who is its centre. It is to be His temple, and the temple is to be composed of the living members of His body. Every member is to be in vital relation with every other member, and in living fellowship with the personal centre of worship. It is to partake of and grow up into His nature, so as to be its satisfactory expression and the sphere of the activity and rest of the Divine Life; in short, to be His house, His home, His body, into which Christ says of the Father and Himself, "We will come and make our abode." And this body is to be *His Bride.* "His kingdom is to be His temple; His temple is to be His Body; His Body is to be *His Bride.*" The relation is not to be a vital one merely, but the vitality of the union is to be of the highest order, of the intensest character, and of all the contrasted qualities of the Divine and human natures in absolute unity. The kingdom of God is to be one of identity of nature between the King and His subjects, held in union by reciprocity of choice. The deepest inner congruity of natures exercising

perfect freedom of choice, will for ever unite God and man, and constitute the eternal kingdom of glory. Identity of nature and reciprocity of choice condition now the most intimate union and the most blessed fellowship among mortals. And this estate of true marriage is the far-off shadow, but yet the true type of that highest union in which our nature stands above all the Heavens as the first-fruits of the growing union between God and His mankind, Christ and His Body, the Bridegroom and His Bride.

This is the relation in which the Son of Man stands to us and to God, for the completion of which in mankind He is exalted to the throne of universal dominion. As the Bridegroom of humanity, He is "head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all." For her He lives and reigns; for her he will put all enemies under His feet; for her He will subdue all things unto Himself, and reconcile all things in One, "till we all come unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Observe, two fulnesses are here spoken of, each the measure of the other; the fulnesses of the Bridegroom and the Bride, Christ and the Church; the one

fulness in the hidden unity of His glorious powers, the other in its fully-developed manifestation in His Church, but each the fulness of the other; the one the fulness of the Head, the other the fulness of the Body, and the two for ever wedded in sweetest and perfectly restful union. Christ in the Church shall enjoy the display of His glories; the Church in her Lord shall enjoy in united fulness the intense blessedness of all her manifold and divided powers. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; I will that they be with Me that they may behold My glory," and that I may be "glorified in them," that we together may be one in glory. For this He was exalted, for this He reigns over all. for this all things are working together until He shall have subdued, redeemed, reconciled, and restored all things. "Then cometh the end when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all and in all."

Let us, my brethren, not allow ourselves to judge of the future estate and final glory of His Bride from her present humble condition. She is now but His betrothed one, waiting and preparing for her espousals; judge not of her by her penury, her sighs and her

tears; rather lift your eyes and look to Him whose absence she mourns, and whose coming she waits. With Him resides that power which now makes the desert a fruitful field, turns barrenness into a garden, and changes the green of spring to the golden harvest of summer; and He it is who hath loved us with an everlasting love—a love stronger than death—who cannot forget, and who, in due time and becoming order, will make us sharers of His throne and partners of His glory. Looked at in their present condition, and judged of from without, His followers may appear degraded, low and outcasts, under the yoke of the tyrant, in the hands of the destroyer, banished and afar off. Men may deride and treat with scorn their professed hopes. "Yet, stay, O scorner! let their poverty and conflict have reverence, for He is partner to the strife whose presence is accomplished victory," Who hath abolished death, and, by His own blood, washed their robes, and made them white, and carried their redeemed nature in its first-fruits and central powers to the throne of the universe as the pledge and also the power of a certain, full, and complete harvest. "A parcel of clay," to use the words of Archbishop Leighton, "is made so bright and set so

high as to outshine all the flaming spirits of eternity and the stars of the morning." And at such a miracle of Grace who can regret his connection with a sinful history which conditions "so great a Salvation?"

Thirdly.—Having considered the Ascension of Christ in its relation to the new heavens and the new earth, and also with respect to the nature and history of man, *let us now look at it, briefly, in its relation to the Government and Providence of God.* If nature is gathered up and crowned in man, and mankind are gathered up and represented in the Son of Man, who is exalted to the throne of universal dominion, then it is clear that all things are governed and caused to work together in the interests of His kingdom, which centres in His body the Church, which is His Bride; that all things are bent to one purpose, the end to which the whole creation moves; and we may say with Herbert:—

"For us the winds do blow;
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see but means our good,
As our *delight*, or as our *treasure:*
The whole is either our cupboard of food,
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The stars have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:
Music and light attend our head.
All things unto our *flesh* is kind
In their *descent* and *being;* to our *mina*
In their *ascent* and *cause.*"

And do not the government and providence of God, as seen in the history of mankind, throughout all its changes, exhibit a similar human service—a ministry for God's purpose in man—commensurate with what we have seen in nature, and subordinated to one and the same end? What nations and kingdoms have arisen and passed away in the greatness of their might when their service could no longer be made subservient to the one purpose!

By no philosophy of the so-called self-constituted laws of human development can you, on the one hand, account for the fact so often repeated in the history of mankind, that national power has been a power of self-destruction—that nation after nation has arisen to great worldly glory only to perish at the height of its pride. While, on the other hand, the real progress of the race has been connected with and embodied in a feeble people of strange and marvellous history, who, dating their origin from the time of man's primitive history,

were brought into connection with each of the great centres of the perishing civilisations; which gathered up and transmitted whatever imperishable treasures they possessed, and were of service in the building up of the kingdom which is never to pass away. Who, moreover, having brought forth "the hope of the world," still survive, scattered over all the earth, as the witnesses of the solitary pathway of man's progressive history, of their own faithlessness to its principles and resistance to the power of its life; as well as the monuments of the mercy which holds them under judgment for a time that the promise to Israel, and through Israel to the whole family of man, may not fail. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" On the one hand we find it written concerning the nations which forgot God and became obstructive of His purpose and prejudicial to the true interests of man, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall not be, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." "Yea, they shall not be planted, yea their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither and

the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble." And, on the other hand, at His call, "who worketh all things according to the good pleasure of His will," did the individual become a family, the family a tribe, and the tribe a nation, which gave us Him in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. How has the "stone, cut out without hands, smitten the great image of gold, and of silver, and brass, and iron, and clay, and broken it to pieces till it became as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, which the wind carried away; whilst the stone that smote the image is fast becoming a great mountain to fill the whole earth!" "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and they shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace—grace unto it; for not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, said the Lord."

The present state and prospects of the world are but the results of all its past history; of the action and reaction, the ceaseless warfare between the spirit of man's revolt in all the forms of rebellious will-worship, and the spirit of his returning allegiance to God and His kingdom. On the one hand, therefore, we have a series of rapid and mighty develop-

ments of that self-destructive world-power which wrought their ruin when at the height of their glory; and side by side, we have from the first the silent continuous growth and expansion of one and the same spiritual power expressing itself in the spiritual ideas and all-conquering beliefs of a life personally embodied in men who confessed their dependence upon, and allegiance to God. The history of the world and man, of nature, providence and grace, is thus seen to be one whole of many parts, in which there has been nothing parenthetic or episodical —nothing in vain, but which has been working together for the one foreseen and pre-determined end. Tempest and storm have combined with sunshine and zephyr, anarchy and rebellion have wrought with submission and order, war and peace, slavery and liberty, sickness and health, death and life have all been made to co-operate in bringing about the condition and prospects of the present hour which carries the necessary preparations, and is charged with the necessary powers for the grand consummation of the Divine purpose. The leaven works through all elements; the tree grows through all seasons; the kingdom advances with every age. Its power

is one in many forms—the power of the Spirit of Life. At first it moved in individuals, then in families and households; then it extended its sway to larger communities of men—now it is found in every quarter of the globe and in every nation, promising to embrace and pervade every sphere of existence and life.

What spheres have not already been taken possession of, in due time to be inspired with loyal submission, and established in perfect order! And if, in the progress of this kingdom, there has been no haste, neither has there been any delay. It is true that after the predictions of ages as to its universality, and the conquest of a thousand prejudices, it was still difficult for the early Christians to believe that Christianity could be for any nation but that of the Jews, but this, like every other barrier of ignorance and prejudice, had to give way before the Spirit of Him who proclaimed the common Father to be the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew, with Whom there could be "no respect of persons," and before Whom there "is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich in mercy unto all that call upon Him." This barrier broken

down, the religion of Jesus was felt to be "a Glorious Gospel to every creature," and went forth preaching the common brotherhood of mankind and ameliorating every condition and relation of human life. Step by step it has advanced from the narrow sphere of the individual to that of the whole world, and has now won the recognition of its claims to be universal and its sphere to be commensurate with that of the natural kingdom of God. Slow may have been its march, but its triumphs have been sure and morally grand.

The equality of every man as the offspring of God, and the consequent brotherhood of all mankind being fully established wherever the Gospel prevailed, the missionary principle—the duty of the Church to send the message of the Father's love to every creature—became recognised. And wherever it has been planted it has taken up in succession the different forms of prevailing vice, personal, social, and national, in order to testify against them. Intemperance, slavery, and war have been compelled to admit the righteousness of its testimony, the justice of its condemnation and made to recognise their doom. In the present day its voice is heard in all the social questions which agitate society for their solution, and nothing that

concerns the well-being of man is regarded as beyond its province. The germinant principles of Christianity are admitted to be related to the whole world towards which it is stretching out its arms promising to embrace and to fill everything with the fulness of its life. Already its spirit begins to weave the garments, colour the light, and temper the atmosphere of the life of the world.

"Christianity," it has been well said, "by virtue of its nature, as a system of religious and moral principles, as well as by the wisdom of its indwelling spirit, will be sure to find its way toward that one community within the circle of civilisation which by national temperament is the most energetic, which the most instinctively embraces doctrines that are seen to be practically good, which makes its elections, in matters of opinion, with the most absolute freedom, a freedom uncontrollably impatient of restraint or interference. That it would choose for itself a people pre-eminently spontaneous in all its doings; self-governing, and in an equal degree loving order; abhorrent of despotism; unknowing in disguises; and silent or acquiescent much rather from a sullen consciousness of individual independence than from

servility or fear. Such is the people (as compared with others) among whom Christ's religion has taken up its home, that from them, set as they are in the midst of the nations, it might go forth to the conquest of the whole world. And in this election of our country and people and tongue, in the Providence of God, as His way and means of mercy to nations round about and beyond to the very ends of the earth, we do but see how in nature He prepares His own way and is His own forerunner as the God of grace. And coming to a naturally-prepared people what has not Christianity done for us as a nation? It is the Gospel that has made us what we are. It is the Gospel that has wrought itself into the national temper, and has moulded us so much to its own fashion. It is the Gospel that has planted in our bosoms that sense of individuality, that seriousness of conviction, which despotism dreads, and can never crush. It is this deep belief and this sense of the authority of truth, which has come to be a national characteristic, and which is the ultimate guarantee of our liberties, religious and moral. It is this Gospel that has given us our higher tone of domestic virtue, our relish for home, our home-bred feelings, our true idea of

personal delicacy, and our sense of individual importance, consistently with individual modesty. It is thence, and from the vernacular diffusion, and the daily usage and hearing of the Scriptures, that we have drawn the power and point, the simplicity and majesty, the tropical richness, the rhetorical opulence, and the fervour of our conversational style and public oratory."

"Combine what is proper to each of these aspects of the same facts, and then the result, expressed in a word, is this—that Christianity, in its migrations through eighteen centuries, has betaken itself to the British people, as if they were *its own*, and that these, under its influence, and inspiration, have become such as they are—if not the most highly-educated among the nations, yet the most effective, the most beneficent, the most humane, and the people to whose purposes and labours the world looks for what is good and hopeful."

3. In the last place, we can but very briefly glance *at the method and means by which this purpose, for which the Son of Man is exalted above all the Heavens, is to be carried out.*

It is being fulfilled in many ways; all means are

subordinate to this one end. That He might fill all things is the one purpose,—"the one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves." For this the Heavens watch, the earth labours, the elements work, and the undesigned strife of human history is carried on. But how many of His ways are past finding out! The Church is too prone to think, and too often, in her ignorance and unbelief, tempted to feel that she is left alone in this work, that it is wholly committed to her, and that she alone is responsible for its accomplishment. She forgets the everywhere present Spirit of God operative in all elements, active in all laws, working in every creature and causing all to work together. She forgets "the innumerable company of angels" who are sent to serve in this great work. She forgets the scale on which it is carried on; the eternity of purpose, the ages of preparation in the past, the vast magnitude and the endless duration of the work to be accomplished, and overlooks its grandeur because its progress is so slow. She forgets the unknown agencies employed in ways unknown of which no account has been given, and limits the operations to those in which she is engaged. Judged from any human point of view the progress seems slow and

the end far, far distant—but though nations, as individuals "die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, yet doth God devise means that His banished ones be not expelled from Him."

Nevertheless, all these by-means must be regarded but as preparations of the field. The seed must be sown before there can be a harvest, and that seed is Christ. And the commission of the Church is plain: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" "and, lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." "For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Word to be preached is "the Word of the Truth of the Gospel," "as Truth is in Jesus." There is no gospel apart from Christ, and there is no Christ apart from His Cross. The very crown He wears is from the cross on which He suffered. Truths concerning Jesus, emasculated of their sacrificial contents, possess no gospel for man. The Redeeming power of Jesus ever stands in the Scriptures in conspicuously contrasted relation to His sacrificial sufferings. It

was only by being "made perfect through suffering that He became the author of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him." His incarnation was His crucifixion begun, and His resurrection was His crucifixion crowned, while His ascension attaches to His triumphant completion of the work given Him to do, the seal of Heaven. That He died for our sins, that He rose again for our justification, that He ascended up into heaven for our glorification—this is the Gospel we are commissioned to preach to every creature.

But salvation by the Gospel is by a scheme of human means and human agency as well as Divine. To be saved men must call upon the name of the Lord; to call upon the name of the Lord they must believe; to believe they must hear; to hear there must be preachers; to preach they must be sent. And if all men have not heard the voice of the preacher making known to them Jesus, let it be spoken to our shame. But when the seed of the Word has been sown, the Spirit must develop its power and life. Two things are ours—preaching and prayer, alike our duty and our privilege. By these the Church of 120 very soon over-ran the nations,

and "turned the world upside-down." By these now will the triumphs of the Church be carried on to her final conquests. When all nations shall have received the witness of the Gospel, then and not till then will the Church at large celebrate her promised victory. Oh, when for this purpose will she return to her first united, prayerful waiting upon God? Then, as at the first, will she renew the celebration of her Pentecost; then again will the confusion and divisions and strife introduced at Babel be reversed as on the day when those who believed were together, and their many languages became as one, and every man heard, in the depth of the inspiration of that hour, "in his own tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God;" then again the language of innocence will be restored, and the language of heaven sent down, and from the lips of disciples—men of every nation under heaven will hear of "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" then will the Church, rising as on eagles' wings, and laying aside her bigotry, and narrowness and prejudice, and all her strife, awake to her heavenly mission, and in the strength of her risen Lord, challenge the powers of evil, while the nations, exclaiming, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair

as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" shall sigh to be renewed.

In conclusion, let me ask you to consider how this breadth of view which the Scriptures give to the facts of the Gospel strengthens the convictions of our individual faith! We too often confine our attention—and it is not unnatural that we do so—to the history of Christ as it lies between the manger and the cross, while what He was before all worlds, and what are His relations to creation as a whole, looked at in the light of His eternal dominion, seem to pale in interest before the pressing needs of our sinful condition, which are met in the common salvation. But from this isolation of the relations of Christ, who has not felt that when they are thus narrowed down, and confined within the limits of man's history, that the means seem disproportioned to the end, and the sacrifice appears altogether too great! But when we see that the history of man stands in intimate relation not with the history of one world, but of all worlds, and also with the opening up of the depths and the universal manifestation of the Father's glory, the conviction is irresistible that the grace of God, which brings salvation to men, is necessary to the complete

revelation of God, and as worthy of God to bestow as it is of man to accept. It is "to the glory of God the Father," and the joy of all worlds, that our nature is seated on the throne of the universe.

Who, then, that has received these facts, and felt the power of these convictions, but is constrained by the influence of Christ's devotion to dedicate Himself to this work! Who that has himself "tasted that the Lord is gracious," but desires to bear the cup of blessing to others that they may partake of its blessedness! We have each, my brethren, one heart which Christ can fill, one life which He can crown, one history which He can exalt, and through which He can reach unto others to the very ends of the earth. Let none of us complain that our powers are too feeble—our sphere too narrow to be of service. We can each work from a centre which embraces every circumference. He who takes charge of the winds—appoints them their way, and gives them their force—will take charge of your desires, your gifts, and your devotion, and give them wings and effectual power. Christ in the heart is as the waters of a fountain, which, though flowing from a given spot, may run to the ends of the earth. Oh! my brethren, who that

considers not only his privileges, but also the state and degradation of our nature in the heathen abroad and the heathen at home, but is constrained to ask, "Can nothing be done?" "Can I do nothing?" "An age," it has been said, not only records what it believes; but, in a certain sense also, it does what it believes." And what is true of an age is true of an individual. What then, with the facts of the Gospel and the state of the world before us, must be the state of our faith? For, what is there that man firmly believes that He cannot do if he tries? "The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and, with an iron hand, he sought, and he grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it he has made two worlds one. I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron, but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths, even deeper than the cable fathomed, to bring up from thence misery's sons and daughters, and the multitudes ready to perish? This is the problem now before us, not for statesmen only —not for preachers only—but for every one." And, let me add, it is no new problem. It is a problem

which Heaven has made her own, and has solved, and God bids you go and proclaim its solution as His Gospel to every creature, not that two nations have been made one, but heaven and earth, God and man, time and eternity. Where are our ardent youths ready to receive their commission for this holy enterprise? Where are the fathers and mothers ready to arouse up their sons and daughters, and stimulate them to consecrate themselves to this work? "Tell me not," said a noble, though a heathen mother, addressing her boys, "Tell me not," said Cornelia, "that I am the daughter of Scipio—*do* something that I may be styled the mother of the Gracchi." Christian youths! Christian mothers! I would fain arouse you to this devotion by this example. But, I pray you, lift up your eyes to Him who wears our nature on the throne of God, who is possessed of all power for the redemption of his brethren, that you may receive your commission from heaven, and be endowed with might from on high. For, at the sight of the Son of Man, exalted to the throne of universal dominion to be a Prince and a Saviour, who can be insensible either to the nobility of his nature, or to the grandeur of human destiny!

We can but feel that this world is not all—that this life is not the measure of our being; and, feeling this, we lose the paralysis of our littleness and isolation, and rising to a higher life and breathing a freer air, we look out upon an unmeasured prospect of blessedness for ourselves and our race. Already, to the eye of the heart, the light rests upon the hill-tops, heralding the day which shall chase away all darkness, rebuke all disease, cast out all sin, and destroy death —the day which shall celebrate a redeemed earth, a regenerated humanity, and the establishment of the kingdom of God—on the throne of which shall sit not God alone, but God and man in One person, for ever and ever.—Amen.

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